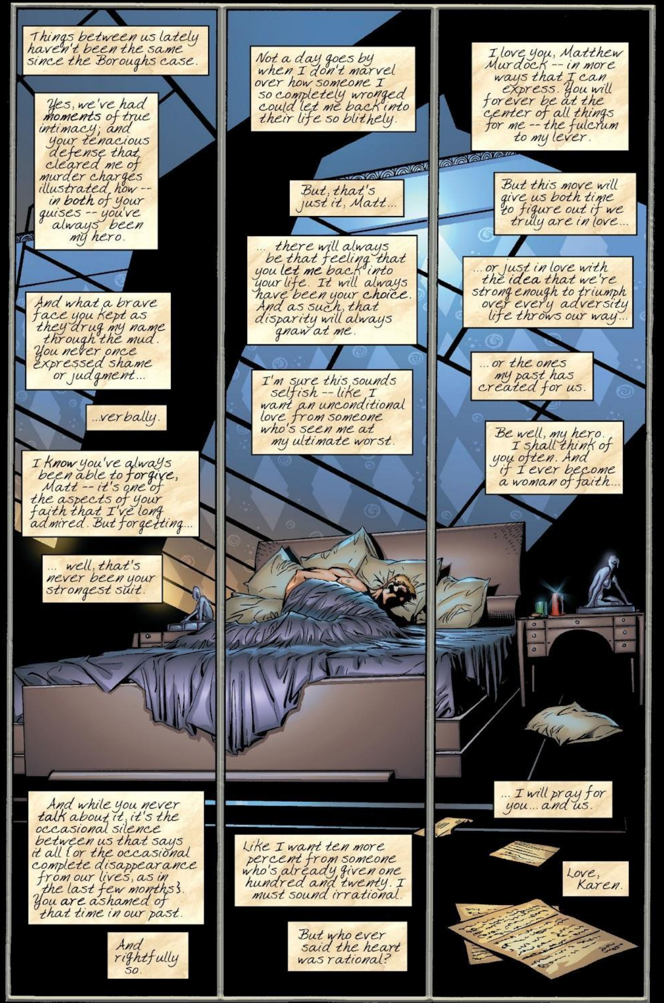

COMIC DUMP #1


DAREDEVIL
MOON KNIGHT
HULK GRAY
JEPH LOEB TIM SALE
CAPTAIN AMERICA
THE WINTER SOLDIER
ULTIMATE COMICS IRON MAN
SUPERGIRL WOMAN OF TOMORROW
NIGHTWING
THE MYSTERY OF MELINDA ZUCCO
FLASHPOINT
PROJECT SUPERMAN REVEALED!
PLASTIC MAN NO MORE!
THE QUESTION
ARMY OF DARKNESS
SONIC THE HEDGEHOG
VS. TAILS! FRIENDS NO MORE
ENEMY OF THE STATE
AND EGGMAN... FRIENDS?
WHO IS ENERJAK?
CAN SONIC WIN... ...AGAINST ULTIMATE POWER?
MARVEL
DYNAMITE ENTERTAINMENT
Archie COMICS


this show
is so damn
good
MARVEL
HIT MONKEY
hulu


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KNIGHTS
MAR
#1
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SMITH
QUESADA
PALMIOTTI
HERE COMES...
DAREDEVIL®
THE MAN WITHOUT FEAR!


Dear Matthew...
I'm not a woman of faith... it's something you've always teased me about.
"When you go to Hell, Karen Page," you'd joke, when I'd snore through your weekly request to join you at Sunday Mass, "I won't be able to rescue you. Don't think I have any pull down there..."
"...just because of the outfit."
But while my faith has never been as strong as yours, my love... I actually prayed last night...
...over what to do about us.
And amidst the cacophony of the Kitchen, I think I got an answer.
When WFSK told me their sister station in Los Angeles offered me the A.M. drive-time slot, we laughed at the idea of the show becoming "Angel of the Morning".
But what your heightened senses probably didn't pick up was that you were laughing a bit harder than me.
I've decided to take the job, Matt.

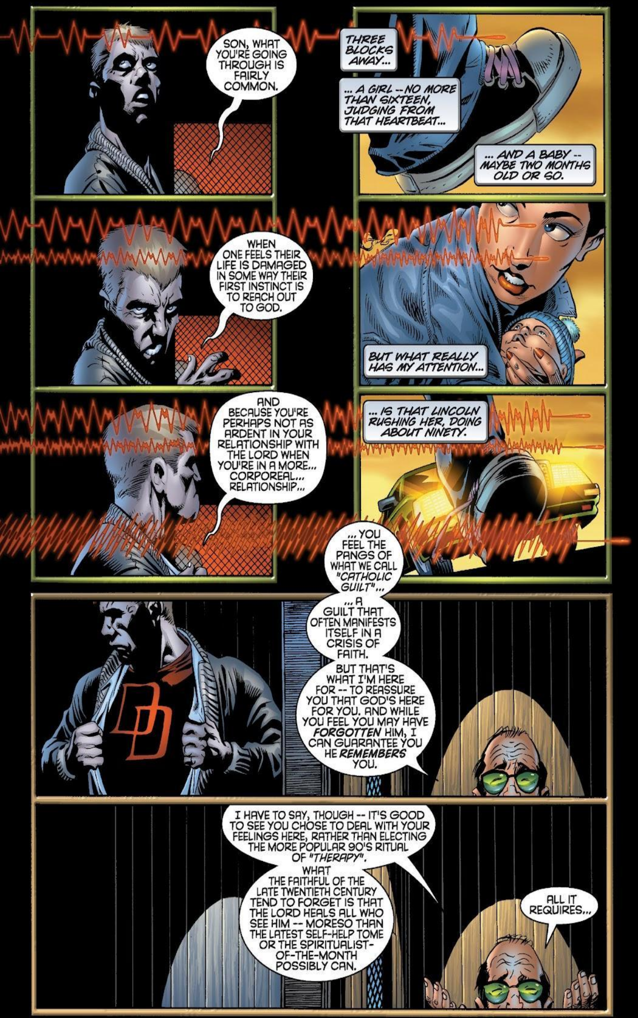

Things between us lately haven't been the same since the Boroughs case.
Yes, we've had moments of true intimacy; and your tenacious defense that cleared me of murder charges illustrated how -- in both of your guises -- you've always been my hero.
And what a brave face you kept as they drug my name through the mud. You never once expressed shame or judgment...
...verbally.
I know you've always been able to forgive, Matt -- it's one of the aspects of your faith that I've long admired. But forgetting...
... well, that's never been your strongest suit.
And while you never talk about it, it's the occasional silence between us that says it all (or the occasional complete disappearance from our lives, as in the last few months). You are ashamed of that time in our past.
And rightfully so.
Not a day goes by when I don't marvel over how someone I so completely wronged could let me back into their life so blithely.
But, that's just it, Matt...
... there will always be that feeling that you let me back into your life. It will always have been your choice. And as such, that disparity will always gnaw at me.
I'm sure this sounds selfish -- like I want an unconditional love from someone who's seen me at my ultimate worst.
Like I want ten more percent from someone who's already given one hundred and twenty. I must sound irrational.
But who ever said the heart was rational?
I love you, Matthew Murdock -- in more ways that I can express. You will forever be at the center of all things for me -- the fulcrum to my lever.
But this move will give us both time to figure out if we truly are in love...
...or just in love with the idea that we're strong enough to triumph over every adversity life throws our way...
...or the ones my past has created for us.
Be well, my hero. I shall think of you often. And if I ever become a woman of faith...
... I will pray for you... and us.
Love, Karen.


IN NEW YORK CITY, A CHILD IS BORN APPROXIMATELY EVERY EIGHT MINUTES.
THERE ARE 218 DIFFERENT HOSPITALS IN THE FIVE BOROUGHS -- MOST OF WHICH ARE BARELY ABLE TO ACCOMMODATE THE CITY'S DAILY NEED TO REPOPULATE ITSELF.
THE AVERAGE MATERNITY WARD IS STAFFED BY EIGHT TO TWELVE NURSES WHO SPEND ALL BUT THEIR LUNCH BREAKS IN A CONSTANT STATE OF CARETAKING FOR PATIENTS THEY HAVE NO GENETIC TIES TO.
AT LEAST TWICE A DAY, THEY RUMINATE ALOUD OR TO THEMSELVES ABOUT THE NEED FOR A LIGHTER WORKLOAD.
AT 11:49 LAST NIGHT...
... THEY GET THEIR WISH.
MATERNITY WARD
Oh MY... GOD!
AAAIIIGGHH!
MATERNITY WARD


GWYNETH USED TO SIT OUT OF GYM AS OFTEN AS SHE COULD, CITING HER MONTHLY CYCLE ON A WEEKLY BASIS.
DAILY BUGLE
HOSPITAL TRAGEDY!
HER PHYS ED MARKS ALWAYS BROUGHT DOWN HER GRADE POINT AVERAGE, BUT GWYNETH RATIONALIZED THE TRADE-OFF AS A FAIR ONE.
Kitchen DINER
GETTING THAT SWEATY DURING THIRD PERIOD ATHLETICS MADE THE REMAINING FIVE PERIODS IN THE SCHOOL DAY A TOUGH SIT -- EVEN AFTER A SHOWER.
SHE OFTEN REASONED THAT THE OBLIGATORY LAPS THE PHYS ED INSTRUCTOR DRILLED THE CLASS WITH WOULD NEVER COME IN HANDY BEYOND HIGH SCHOOL.
THIS MORNING -- AS HER LUNGS BURN HOTTER IN HER CHEST THAN ANY NON-SMOKING SIXTEEN YEAR OLD'S LUNGS SHOULD AFTER SPRINTING THROUGH BACK ALLEYS FOR TWENTY MINUTES --
-- GWYNETH'S WISHING SHE'D BEEN A TAD MORE GRADE CONSCIOUS.
VIP


IN THE QUIET MOMENTS BETWEEN THE INEVITABLE DETECTION BY THE MEN IN THE CAR, GWYNETH RECALLED THE DAY SHE TOLD HER VERY CATHOLIC PARENTS THAT SHE WAS FOUR MONTHS PREGNANT.
THE SILENT RAGE AND SHAME SHE HEARD IN THEIR VOICES WHEN THEY ADDRESSED HER FROM THAT MOMENT ON ALMOST MADE HER LONG FOR PARENTS WHO BELIEVED IN CORPORAL PUNISHMENT.
SHE CAN STILL FEEL THE DAMP AGAINST HER CHEEK FROM THE TEAR-SOAKED PILLOW SHE'D CRY HERSELF TO SLEEP ON NIGHTLY, AS SHE PRAYED OVER AND OVER, MANTRA-LIKE...
"...LET THIS BE THE WORST IT GETS."
SAL
BROOKLYN
WHEN SHE AWOKE IN TIME TO SEE THE MEN BEHEADING HER MOTHER OVER HER FATHER'S CORPSE...
...GWYNETH ALLOWED HERSELF ONLY A HALF-SECOND TO MARK THE IRONY.
MAY THE LORD FILL YOU WITH HIS HOLY TRUST...
...OFFERING ABSOLUTION FOR THE TRESPASSES YOU'RE ABOUT TO CONFESS.
TURN NOT A BLIND EYE TO HIS INFINITE MERCY...
...BUT INSTEAD SEE WITH A PURE HEART THE GRACE HIS SACRAMENT OF PENANCE BESTOWS ON YOU.

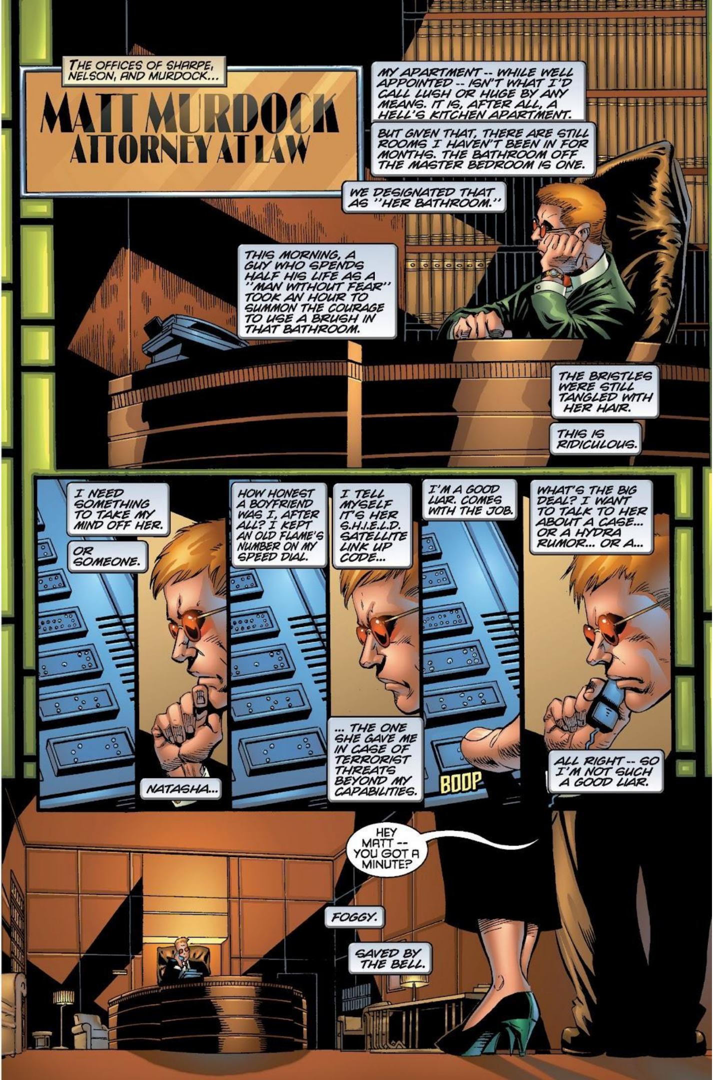

FORGIVE ME, FATHER -- FOR I HAVE SINNED.
IT'S BEEN... FAR TOO LONG SINCE MY LAST CONFESSION.
SIX MONTHS AGO, MY GIRLFRIEND LEFT ME...
AH -- THE BROKEN HEARTED.
WHY IS IT YOU PEOPLE REMEMBER THE LORD AFTER YOUR SIGNIFICANT OTHERS HAVE FORGOTTEN YOU?
ACTUALLY, FATHER -- THAT'S WHY I'M HERE. YOU SEE -- I'M HAVING A HARD TIME REMEMBERING THE LORD.
NOT NOW.

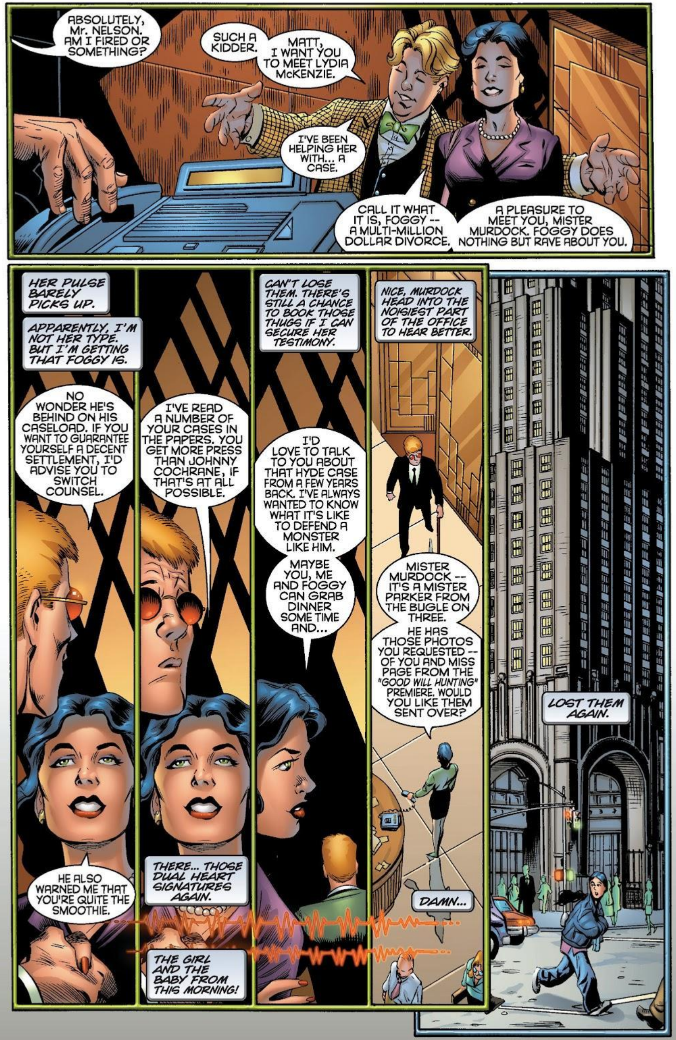

SON, WHAT YOU'RE GOING THROUGH IS FAIRLY COMMON.
THREE BLOCKS AWAY...
... A GIRL -- NO MORE THAN SIXTEEN, JUDGING FROM THAT HEARTBEAT...
... AND A BABY -- MAYBE TWO MONTHS OLD OR SO.
WHEN ONE FEELS THEIR LIFE IS DAMAGED IN SOME WAY THEIR FIRST INSTINCT IS TO REACH OUT TO GOD.
BUT WHAT REALLY HAS MY ATTENTION...
AND BECAUSE YOU'RE PERHAPS NOT AS ARDENT IN YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH THE LORD WHEN YOU'RE IN A MORE... CORPOREAL... RELATIONSHIP...
... IS THAT LINCOLN RUSHING HER, DOING ABOUT NINETY.
... YOU FEEL THE PANGS OF WHAT WE CALL "CATHOLIC GUILT"...
... A GUILT THAT OFTEN MANIFESTS ITSELF IN A CRISIS OF FAITH.
BUT THAT'S WHAT I'M HERE FOR -- TO REASSURE YOU THAT GOD'S HERE FOR YOU. AND WHILE YOU FEEL YOU MAY HAVE FORGOTTEN HIM, I CAN GUARANTEE YOU HE REMEMBERS YOU.
I HAVE TO SAY, THOUGH -- IT'S GOOD TO SEE YOU CHOSE TO DEAL WITH YOUR FEELINGS HERE, RATHER THAN ELECTING THE MORE POPULAR 90'S RITUAL OF "THERAPY".
WHAT THE FAITHFUL OF THE LATE TWENTIETH CENTURY TEND TO FORGET IS THAT THE LORD HEALS ALL WHO SEE HIM -- MORESO THAN THE LATEST SELF-HELP TOME OR THE SPIRITUALIST-OF-THE-MONTH POSSIBLY CAN.
ALL IT REQUIRES...

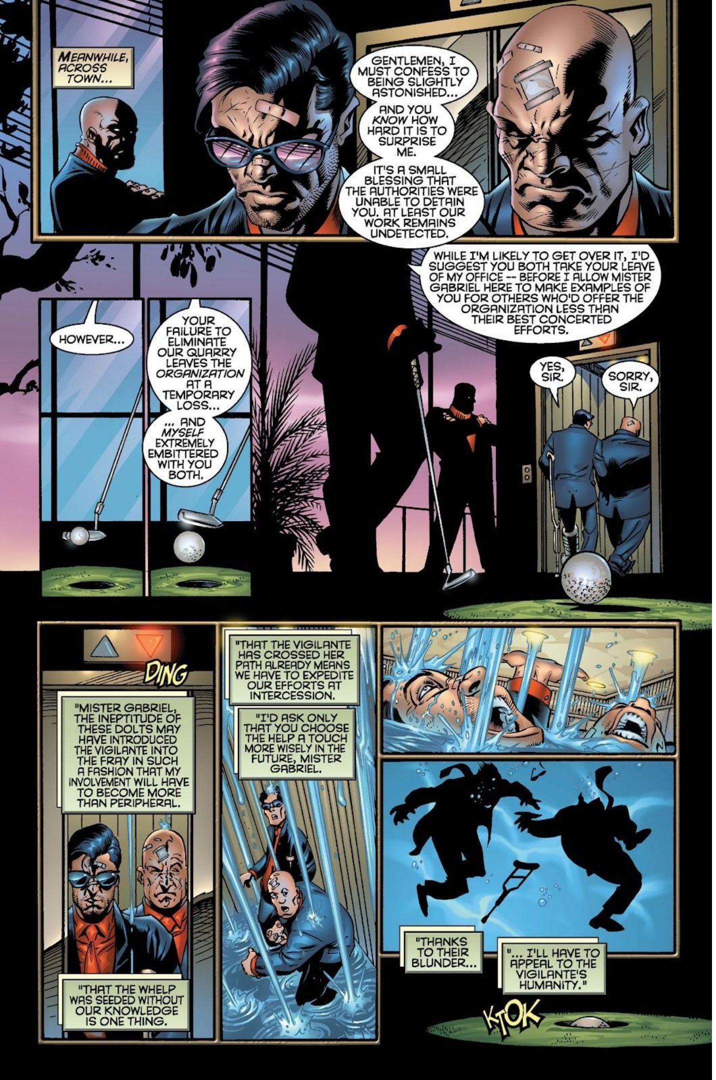

"... IS A LEAP OF FAITH."
Stan Lee presents DAREDEVIL in
GUARDIAN DEVIL
PART ONE:
"...AND A CHILD SHALL LEAD THEM ALL."
KEVIN "You asked for him, you got him" SMITH WRITER
JOE "Smoovie Q" QUESADA PENCILER
JIMMY "Who's your daddy?!" PALMIOTTI INKER
BRIAN HABERLIN STUDIOS DAN "The Bacon" KEMP COLORS
RS & COMICRAFT'S LIZ "Danger's my middle name" AGRAPHIOTIS LETTERING
NANCI "Menace to society" DAKESIAN EDITOR
BOB "You couldn't pay us enough to do his job" HARRAS EDITOR IN CHIEF

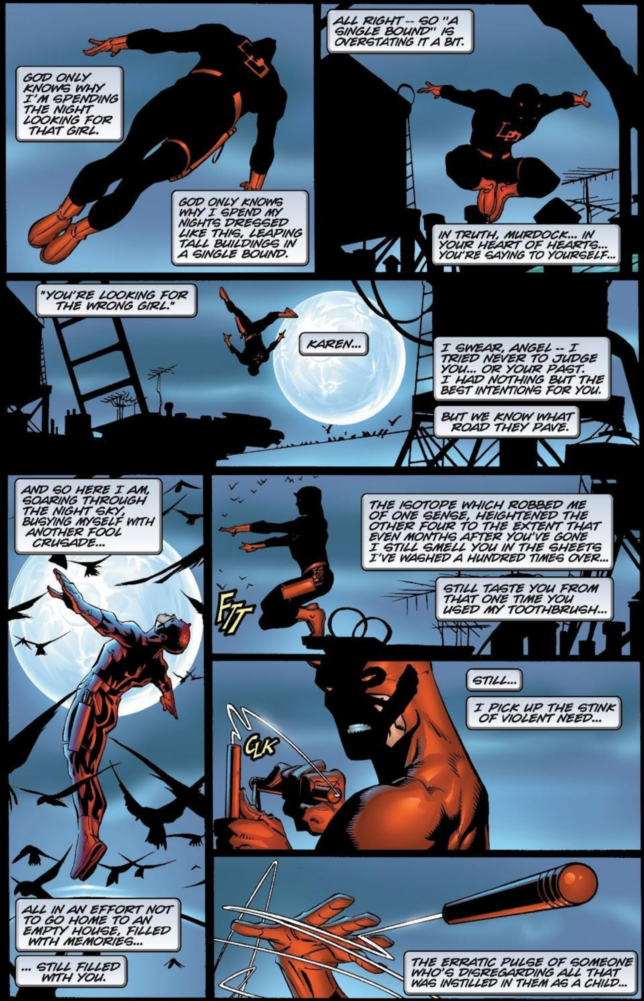

THE ARROGANCE OF JOHN Q. AVERAGE CRIMINAL THUG NEVER CEASES TO AMAZE ME.
DON'T THESE PEOPLE READ THE PAPERS OR WATCH THE NEWS...
... OR EVEN TRADE STORIES IN A SEEDY BAR SOMEWHERE? HOW IS IT THEY'RE NEVER APPRISED OF THE FACT...
... THAT THE KITCHEN IS UNDER MY PROTECTION?
KRRKSHH
THE COSTUME IS LINED WITH A METICULOUSLY WOVEN MICRO-MESH STEEL FIBER.
GOD BLESS REED RICHARDS.
THE HYDRANT FALLS UNDER THE BILLION-A-YEAR INSURANCE POLICY THE CITY TOOK OUT FOR METAHUMAN DAMAGES.
I BROKERED THE DEAL LAST MONTH -- FEE LESS.
MORE OF THAT CATHOLIC GUILT THE PADRE WAS TALKING ABOUT.


THE ADRENALINE RUSH SUBSIDES ONCE THE THREAT IS NEUTRALIZED.
AND I'M BACK TO SQUARE ONE -- BATTLING BACK THAT ACHING SENSE OF MOROSE SOLITUDE I WOKE UP WITH.
I THOUGHT A VISIT TO CHURCH MIGHT ALLEVIATE IT. LIKE WHEN I WAS A KID, AND I'D OBSESS OVER...
NO! STAY FOCUSED ON THE TASK AT HAND.
FIRST, CLEAN UP THE MESS.
ONE OUT COLD ONE SUBDUED ENOUGH TO LEAVE IN THE HANDS OF NEW YORK'S FINEST.
GIVES ME A MOMENT TO CONCENTRATE ON THE OBJECT OF THEIR PURSUIT...
... AND FIND OUT WHY SHE WAS IN SUCH HIGH DEMAND.
THAT'S WHEN I REALIZE...
SHE'S GONE.
GETTING THE TRUTH OUT OF THE TWO JOKERS IN THE CAR IS GOING TO PROVE FRUITLESS WITHOUT HER TESTIMONY AS TO WHY THEY WERE TRYING TO RUN HER DOWN...
WHICH MEANS I'LL SPEND THE NEXT FEW MINUTES EXPLAINING TO THE POLICE WHY I FELT THE NEED TO PUT MY FIST THROUGH THE WINDSHIELD OF A CAR AND DESTROY CITY PROPERTY.
THANKS, LITTLE GIRL.
YOU'VE JUST MADE MY LIFE INCREMENTALLY MORE DIFFICULT.


THE OFFICES OF SHARPE, NELSON, AND MURDOCK...
MATT MURDOCK ATTORNEY AT LAW
MY APARTMENT -- WHILE WELL APPOINTED -- ISN'T WHAT I'D CALL LUSH OR HUGE BY ANY MEANS. IT IS, AFTER ALL, A HELL'S KITCHEN APARTMENT.
BUT GIVEN THAT, THERE ARE STILL ROOMS I HAVEN'T BEEN IN FOR MONTHS. THE BATHROOM OFF THE MASTER BEDROOM IS ONE.
WE DESIGNATED THAT AS "HER BATHROOM."
THIS MORNING, A GUY WHO SPENDS HALF HIS LIFE AS A "MAN WITHOUT FEAR" TOOK AN HOUR TO SUMMON THE COURAGE TO USE A BRUSH IN THAT BATHROOM.
THE BRISTLES WERE STILL TANGLED WITH HER HAIR.
THIS IS RIDICULOUS.
I NEED SOMETHING TO TAKE MY MIND OFF HER.
OR SOMEONE.
NATASHA...
HOW HONEST A BOYFRIEND WAS I, AFTER ALL? I KEPT AN OLD FLAME'S NUMBER ON MY SPEED DIAL.
I TELL MYSELF IT'S HER S.H.I.E.L.D. SATELLITE LINK UP CODE...
... THE ONE SHE GAVE ME IN CASE OF TERRORIST THREATS BEYOND MY CAPABILITIES.
I'M A GOOD LIAR. COMES WITH THE JOB.
BOOP
WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL? I WANT TO TALK TO HER ABOUT A CASE... OR A HYDRA RUMOR... OR A...
ALL RIGHT -- SO I'M NOT SUCH A GOOD LIAR.
HEY MATT -- YOU GOT A MINUTE?
FOGGY.
SAVED BY THE BELL.


ABSOLUTELY, Mr. NELSON. AM I FIRED OR SOMETHING?
SUCH A KIDDER.
MATT, I WANT YOU TO MEET LYDIA McKENZIE.
I'VE BEEN HELPING HER WITH... A CASE.
CALL IT WHAT IT IS, FOGGY -- A MULTI-MILLION DOLLAR DIVORCE.
A PLEASURE TO MEET YOU, MISTER MURDOCK. FOGGY DOES NOTHING BUT RAVE ABOUT YOU.
HER PULSE BARELY PICKS UP.
APPARENTLY, I'M NOT HER TYPE. BUT I'M GETTING THAT FOGGY IS.
NO WONDER HE'S BEHIND ON HIS CASELOAD. IF YOU WANT TO GUARANTEE YOURSELF A DECENT SETTLEMENT, I'D ADVISE YOU TO SWITCH COUNSEL.
HE ALSO WARNED ME THAT YOU'RE QUITE THE SMOOTHIE.
I'VE READ A NUMBER OF YOUR CASES IN THE PAPERS. YOU GET MORE PRESS THAN JOHNNY COCHRANE, IF THAT'S AT ALL POSSIBLE.
THERE... THOSE DUAL HEART SIGNATURES AGAIN.
THE GIRL AND THE BABY FROM THIS MORNING!
CAN'T LOSE THEM. THERE'S STILL A CHANCE TO BOOK THOSE THUGS IF I CAN SECURE HER TESTIMONY.
I'D LOVE TO TALK TO YOU ABOUT THAT HYDE CASE FROM A FEW YEARS BACK. I'VE ALWAYS WANTED TO KNOW WHAT IT'S LIKE TO DEFEND A MONSTER LIKE HIM.
MAYBE YOU, ME AND FOGGY CAN GRAB DINNER SOME TIME AND...
NICE, MURDOCK. HEAD INTO THE NOISIEST PART OF THE OFFICE TO HEAR BETTER.
MISTER MURDOCK -- IT'S A MISTER PARKER FROM THE BUGLE ON THREE.
HE HAS THOSE PHOTOS YOU REQUESTED -- OF YOU AND MISS PAGE FROM THE "GOOD WILL HUNTING" PREMIERE. WOULD YOU LIKE THEM SENT OVER?
DAMN...
LOST THEM AGAIN.


MEANWHILE, ACROSS TOWN...
GENTLEMEN, I MUST CONFESS TO BEING SLIGHTLY ASTONISHED...
AND YOU KNOW HOW HARD IT IS TO SURPRISE ME.
IT'S A SMALL BLESSING THAT THE AUTHORITIES WERE UNABLE TO DETAIN YOU. AT LEAST OUR WORK REMAINS UNDETECTED.
HOWEVER...
YOUR FAILURE TO ELIMINATE OUR QUARRY LEAVES THE ORGANIZATION AT A TEMPORARY LOSS...
... AND MYSELF EXTREMELY EMBITTERED WITH YOU BOTH.
WHILE I'M LIKELY TO GET OVER IT, I'D SUGGEST YOU BOTH TAKE YOUR LEAVE OF MY OFFICE -- BEFORE I ALLOW MISTER GABRIEL HERE TO MAKE EXAMPLES OF YOU FOR OTHERS WHO'D OFFER THE ORGANIZATION LESS THAN THEIR BEST CONCERTED EFFORTS.
YES, SIR.
SORRY, SIR.
DING
"MISTER GABRIEL, THE INEPTITUDE OF THESE DOLTS MAY HAVE INTRODUCED THE VIGILANTE INTO THE FRAY IN SUCH A FASHION THAT MY INVOLVEMENT WILL HAVE TO BECOME MORE THAN PERIPHERAL.
"THAT THE WHELP WAS SEEDED WITHOUT OUR KNOWLEDGE IS ONE THING.
"THAT THE VIGILANTE HAS CROSSED HER PATH ALREADY MEANS WE HAVE TO EXPEDITE OUR EFFORTS AT INTERCESSION.
"I'D ASK ONLY THAT YOU CHOOSE THE HELP A TOUCH MORE WISELY IN THE FUTURE, MISTER GABRIEL.
"THANKS TO THEIR BLUNDER...
"... I'LL HAVE TO APPEAL TO THE VIGILANTE'S HUMANITY."
KTOK

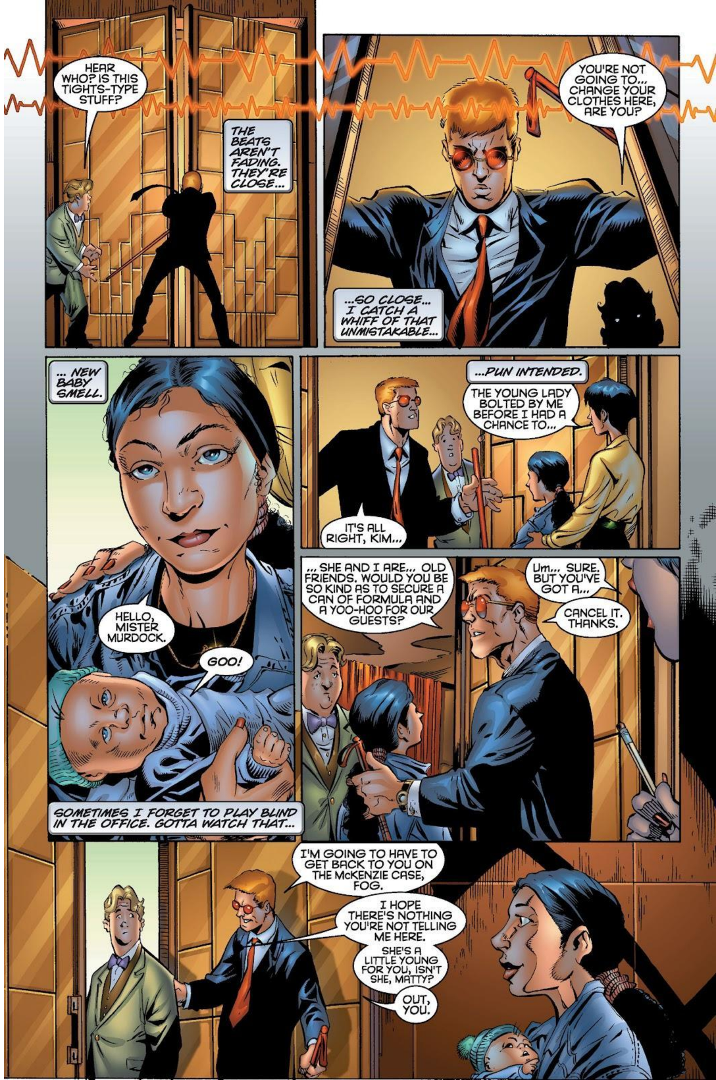

GOD ONLY KNOWS WHY I'M SPENDING THE NIGHT LOOKING FOR THAT GIRL.
GOD ONLY KNOWS WHY I SPEND MY NIGHTS DRESSED LIKE THIS, LEAPING TALL BUILDINGS IN A SINGLE BOUND.
ALL RIGHT -- SO "A SINGLE BOUND" IS OVERSTATING IT A BIT.
IN TRUTH, MURDOCK... IN YOUR HEART OF HEARTS... YOU'RE SAYING TO YOURSELF...
"YOU'RE LOOKING FOR THE WRONG GIRL."
KAREN...
I SWEAR, ANGEL -- I TRIED NEVER TO JUDGE YOU... OR YOUR PAST. I HAD NOTHING BUT THE BEST INTENTIONS FOR YOU.
BUT WE KNOW WHAT ROAD THEY PAVE.
AND SO HERE I AM, SOARING THROUGH THE NIGHT SKY, BUSYING MYSELF WITH ANOTHER FOOL CRUSADE...
ALL IN AN EFFORT NOT TO GO HOME TO AN EMPTY HOUSE, FILLED WITH MEMORIES...
... STILL FILLED WITH YOU.
THE ISOTOPE WHICH ROBBED ME OF ONE SENSE, HEIGHTENED THE OTHER FOUR TO THE EXTENT THAT EVEN MONTHS AFTER YOU'VE GONE I STILL SMELL YOU IN THE SHEETS I'VE WASHED A HUNDRED TIMES OVER...
STILL TASTE YOU FROM THAT ONE TIME YOU USED MY TOOTHBRUSH...
FTT
STILL...
I PICK UP THE STINK OF VIOLENT NEED...
CLK
THE ERRATIC PULSE OF SOMEONE WHO'S DISREGARDING ALL THAT WAS INSTILLED IN THEM AS A CHILD...


TK
...FOR A CARNAL RELEASE.
LORD
KRK
...EVERY NIGHT, YOU PUT ON AN IMMORALITY PLAY FOR ME...
YOU SHOW ME THE DISPARITY OF MAN'S MAGNIFICENCE TO HIS ACTIONS. EONS OF EVOLVEMENT, AND WE'RE STILL SEEKING THE DARKENED CORNERS TO SATE OUR LOWEST IMPULSES.
HOW DISAPPOINTING IT MUST BE FOR YOU TO SEE US AT OUR WORST...
SNAP
...IF YOU EVEN EXIST.


THE MEAT-PACKING DISTRICT: AROUND THREE A.M....
THANK YOU...
...LORD.



THE LAW OFFICES OF SHARPE, NELSON, AND MURDOCK...
"FOGGY, YOU KNOW HOW I FEEL ABOUT DIVORCE CASES..."
"I KNOW, I KNOW -- THE ONLY REASON I TOOK IT ON WAS BECAUSE ROSALIND WAS BADGERING ME ABOUT FINANCIAL QUOTAS, MATT."
BUT THIS ONE'S DIFFERENT. HER EX-HUSBAND -- HE DID SOMETHING TO HER.
LET ME GUESS -- HE LEFT HER FOR A GIRL YOUNG ENOUGH TO BE THEIR DAUGHTER?
HE HAD HER STERILIZED, MATT.
WHAT?!
SHE DIDN'T EVEN KNOW UNTIL HER LAST GYNECOLOGICAL EXAM. HE HAD IT DONE WITHOUT HER KNOWLEDGE.
HEARING SOMETHING LIKE THAT MAKES ME WONDER... WHERE I STAND ON GOD?
I SOMETIMES FEEL LIKE HE'S STANDING ON ME.
THIS COMING FROM THE GUY WHO'S PRACTICALLY MISTER LIZ OSBORN.
YES... LIZ. I LIKE LIZ. I LOVE LIZ.
BUT SHE'S NO LYDIA.
NO, FOGGY -- DO NOT TELL ME YOU'VE GOT A TEXTBOOK CASE OF "FLORENCE NIGHTINGALE" SYNDROME...
GOTCHA!
THE TWIN HEARTBEATS ARE SUDDENLY ALMOST DEAFENING.
MATT? WHAT'S...?
THEY'RE NEAR! I CAN HEAR THEM!



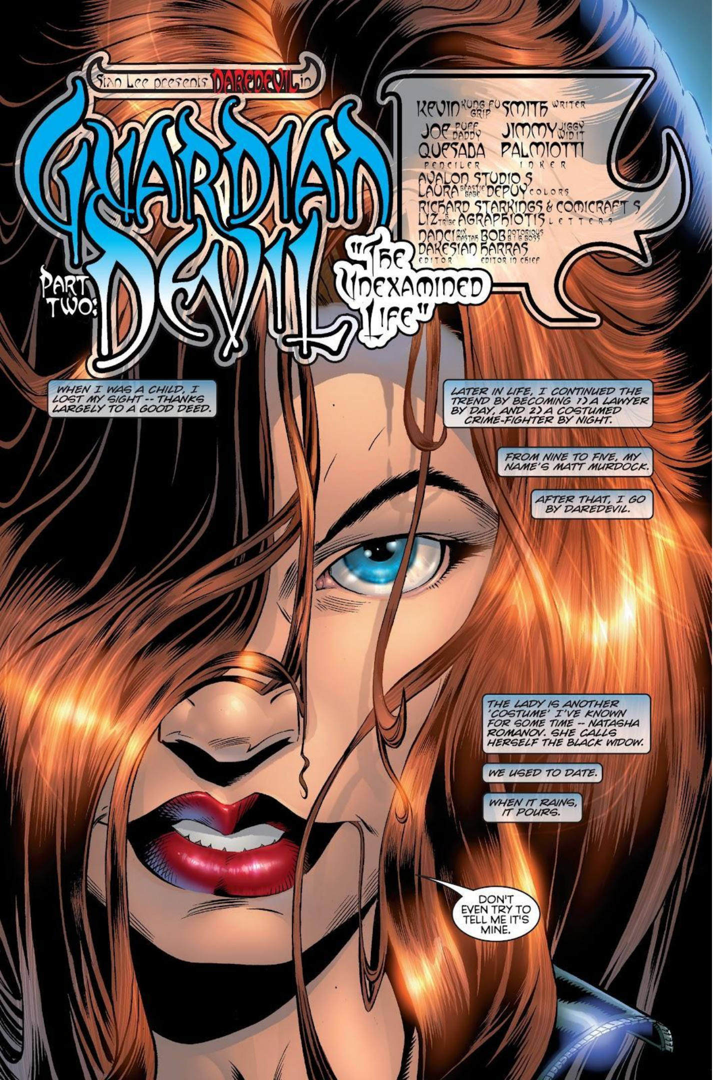
HEAR WHO? IS THIS TIGHTS-TYPE STUFF?
THE BEATS AREN'T FADING. THEY'RE CLOSE...
YOU'RE NOT GOING TO... CHANGE YOUR CLOTHES HERE, ARE YOU?
...SO CLOSE... I CATCH A WHIFF OF THAT UNMISTAKABLE...
... NEW BABY SMELL.
HELLO, MISTER MURDOCK.
GOO!
SOMETIMES I FORGET TO PLAY BLIND IN THE OFFICE. GOTTA WATCH THAT...
...PUN INTENDED.
THE YOUNG LADY BOLTED BY ME BEFORE I HAD A CHANCE TO...
IT'S ALL RIGHT, KIM...
... SHE AND I ARE... OLD FRIENDS. WOULD YOU BE SO KIND AS TO SECURE A CAN OF FORMULA AND A YOO-HOO FOR OUR GUESTS?
Um... SURE. BUT YOU'VE GOT A...
CANCEL IT. THANKS.
I'M GOING TO HAVE TO GET BACK TO YOU ON THE McKENZIE CASE, FOG.
I HOPE THERE'S NOTHING YOU'RE NOT TELLING ME HERE.
SHE'S A LITTLE YOUNG FOR YOU, ISN'T SHE, MATTY?
OUT, YOU.


TWENTY MINUTES LATER...
...SO YOU MIGHT IMAGINE MY FATHER'S REACTION, MISTER MURDOCK -- LET ALONE EVERYONE ELSE'S.
I MEAN, COMING FROM A FIFTEEN YEAR OLD, I GUESS IT WAS KIND OF HARD FOR EVERYONE TO SWALLOW.
ABOUT THE FATHER?
ABOUT MY VIRGINITY.
NEEDLESS TO SAY, I'M FLABBERGASTED...
A CONDITION THAT'S ONLY EXACERBATED AS SHE PROCEEDS TO EXPLAIN HOW SHE'S NEVER "BEEN WITH" ANYONE AND HOW -- UNTIL THAT MORNING -- SHE HAD NO EXPLANATION AS TO HOW SHE CAME TO BE WITH, THEN HAVE A CHILD.
SHE FOLLOWS THIS WITH A TALE ABOUT THE MURDER OF HER PARENTS AT THE HAND OF THE MEN WHO WERE CHASING HER -- ALL OVER THIS SEEMINGLY "IMMACULATE CONCEPTION."
I'D WRITE IT OFF AS THE OVERACTIVE IMAGINATION OF A KID WHO'S WATCHED FAR TOO MANY EPISODES OF "THE X-FILES."
... EXCEPT HER PULSE HASN'T ALTERED A BEAT IN ALL THE TIME SHE'S BEEN TALKING, AND SHE'S EMITTED NOT A SINGLE PHEROMONE.
SHE'S TELLING THE TRUTH... OR AT LEAST SHE'S CONVINCED HERSELF SHE IS.
I ASK HER WHAT SHE'D LIKE ME TO DO.
SHE SAYS...
I THOUGHT YOU KNEW...?
KNEW WHAT?
THE DREAM... THE ANGEL... SHE SAID YOU'D PROTECT MY BABY.
WELL... I CAN OFFER YOU BOTH LEGAL PROTECTION, IF THAT'S WHAT THE "ANGEL" MEANT...
I TELL HER THAT -- WITH HER TESTIMONY -- WE CAN PROSECUTE THE THUGS THAT WERE CHASING HER. I ASSURE HER THAT WE CAN ENTER HER INTO THE WITNESS PROTECTION RELOCATION PROGRAM.
MISTER MURDOCK... THE ANGEL TOLD ME YOU'RE DAREDEVIL.


DO YOU STUDY YOUR BIBLE, MISTER MURDOCK?
NOT SINCE TENTH GRADE CCD.* THOUGH RIGHT ABOUT NOW...
...I WISH I'D STAYED CURRENT.
THE REDEEMER SWORE HE'D RETURN IN THE FINAL DAYS, TO SAVE THE JUST AND JUDGE THE WICKED.
I DON'T KNOW WHY THEY CHOSE ME, BUT THIS CHILD IS THAT REDEEMER. IN THIRTY YEARS TIME, ITS WORK WILL BEGIN.
YOU HAVE TO SHIELD THE CHILD FROM THE EVIL MEN WHO ARE CHASING ME. CHASING US.
*Confraternity of Christian Doctrine or Sunday School -- J&J
YOU'RE A GOOD MAN -- THE ANGEL TOLD ME. I TRUST YOU.
KEEP MY BABY SAFE... AT LEAST, UNTIL HELP ARRIVES.
YOU'RE OUR ONLY HOPE, MISTER MURDOCK...
YOU'RE THIS WORLD'S ONLY HOPE.
HER KISS IS ALMOST... ETHEREAL.
KEEP THE FAITH.
HEY! WAIT A SECOND!
At 5:25 pm...
... the mother of the world vanished from the law offices of Sharpe, Nelson, and Murdock.


At 5:26 p.m. the savior was left in the devil's care.


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SMITH
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PALMIOTTI
HERE COMES...
DAREDEVIL
THE MAN WITHOUT FEAR!



Stan Lee presents DAREDEVIL in
GUARDIAN DEVIL
PART TWO:
"THE UNEXAMINED LIFE"
KEVIN KUNG FU GRIP SMITH WRITER
JOE PUFF DADDY QUESADA PENCILER
JIMMY JIGGY WID IT PALMIOTTI INKER
AVALON STUDIOS & LAURA BEASTIE BABE DEPUY COLORS
RICHARD STARKINGS & COMICRAFT'S LIZ IS TRIBE AGRAPHIOTIS LETTERS
NANCI MIX MASTAH DAKESIAN EDITOR
BOB NOTORIOUS B.I.G. BOSS HARRAS EDITOR IN CHIEF
WHEN I WAS A CHILD, I LOST MY SIGHT -- THANKS LARGELY TO A GOOD DEED.
LATER IN LIFE, I CONTINUED THE TREND BY BECOMING 1) A LAWYER BY DAY, AND 2) A COSTUMED CRIME-FIGHTER BY NIGHT.
FROM NINE TO FIVE, MY NAME'S MATT MURDOCK.
AFTER THAT, I GO BY DAREDEVIL.
THE LADY IS ANOTHER 'COSTUME' I'VE KNOWN FOR SOME TIME -- NATASHA ROMANOV. SHE CALLS HERSELF THE BLACK WIDOW.
WE USED TO DATE.
WHEN IT RAINS, IT POURS.
DON'T EVEN TRY TO TELL ME IT'S MINE.

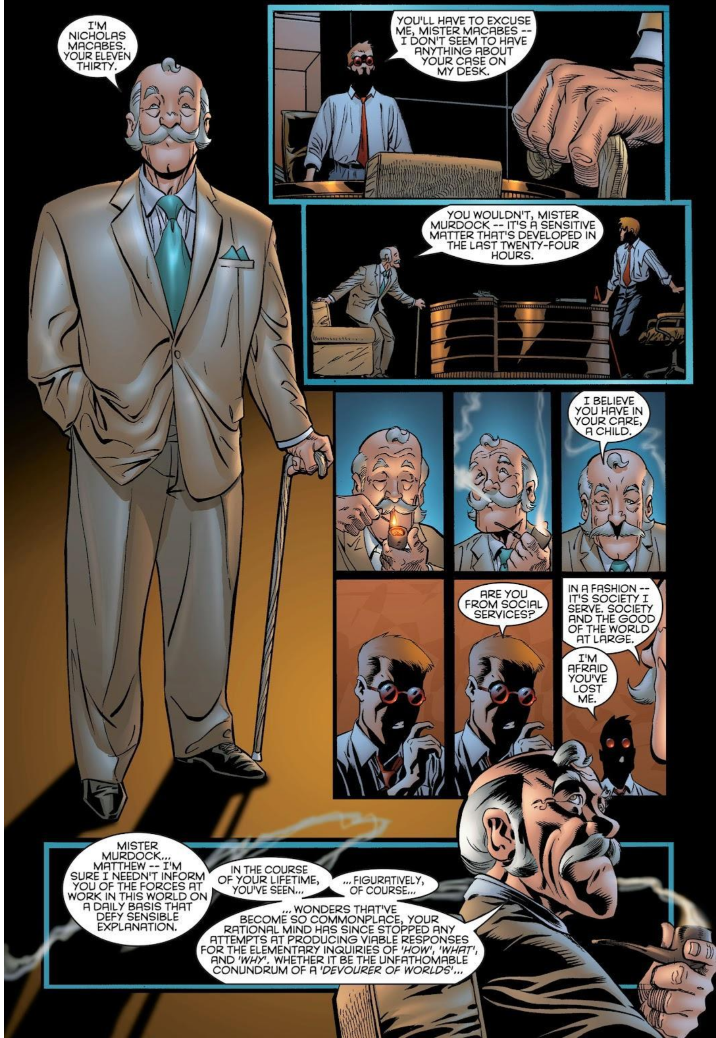


WELL, THERE GOES PLAN 'A'.
HOW ARE YOU, NATASHA?
CURIOUS, MATTHEW.
I'M WONDERING WHY YOU WOULD TRY TO CALL ME, ONLY TO ABORT BEFORE THE CONNECTION WAS MADE.
SOMETHING CAME UP. SOMETHING WHO'S HARDER TO ENTERTAIN THAN A JADED FILM CRITIC.
I'VE NOTICED. TELL ME -- DID YOUR WICKED, WOMANIZING PAST FINALLY CATCH UP WITH YOU?
BUNCH IN A BOX
YESTERDAY MORNING, I'M IN CONFESSION...
STILL WITH THE CHURCH. IN ALL THE TIME WE SPENT TOGETHER, DIDN'T YOU LEARN ANYTHING FROM THE GODLESS SOVIET?
... AND I PICK UP A GIRL AND AN INFANT BEING RUN DOWN. DAREDEVIL PUTS THE KIBOSH ON THE THUGS, BUT THE GIRL AND THE BABY DISAPPEAR.
LAST NIGHT, THE GIRL SHOWS UP IN MY OFFICE, AND DUMPS THE BABY IN MY LAP...
AND SUDDENLY, YOU'RE A DADDY.
I'M NOT THIS KID'S FATHER, I ASSURE YOU.
COULD'VE FOOLED ME...
HE'S GOT YOUR GRIP.

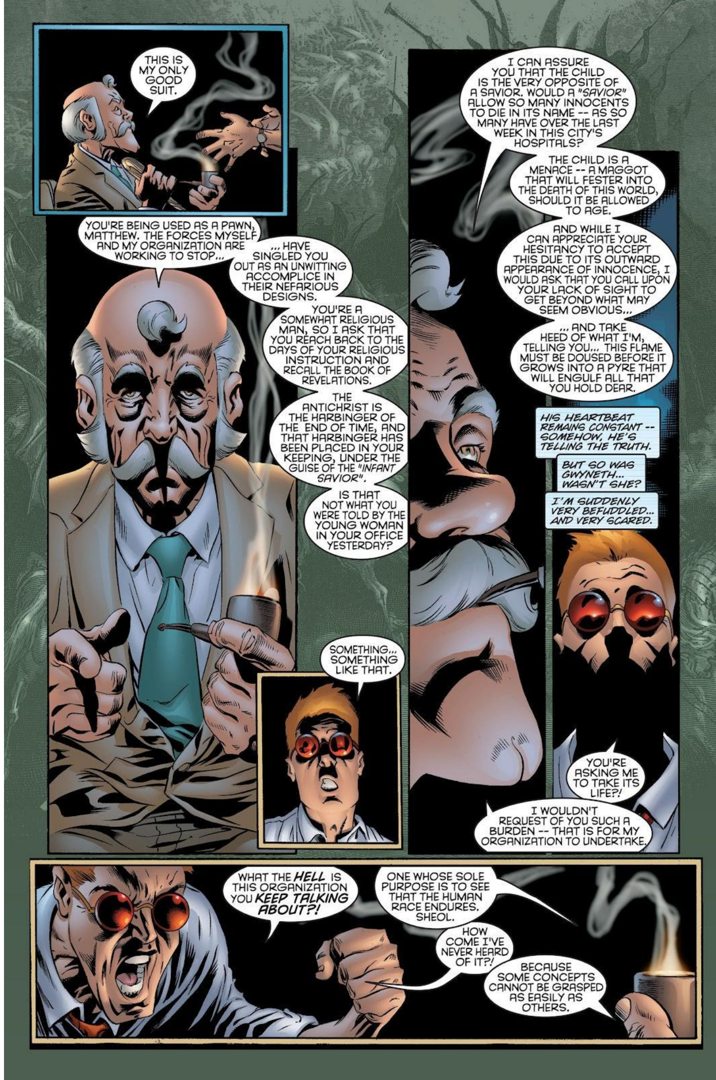

THE GIRL TOLD ME THIS CHILD WAS SOME SORT OF SAVIOR -- A REDEEMER. SHE SAID AN ANGEL TOLD HER TO SEEK ME OUT -- TO PROTECT THE CHILD.
IDEALISTIC YOU'VE ALWAYS BEEN, MATTHEW -- BUT GULLIBLE? THAT'S A NEW ATTRIBUTE.
SHE ALSO SAID THE ANGEL TOLD HER I WAS DAREDEVIL.
MAKE THAT *EXTREMELY* GULLIBLE. DIDN'T YOU ONCE TELL ME THAT WILSON FISK KNEW AS WELL?
SNK
LOOK -- HE'S A CLEVER LITTLE THING.
HEY, HEY! CAREFUL THERE!
AREN'T THOSE THINGS LETHAL?
BUT APPARENTLY NOT CHILDPROOF. REMIND ME NEVER TO ASK TONY STARK FOR ENGINEERING TIPS AGAIN.
SO WHAT -- DID YOU WANT ME TO HELP YOU TRACK DOWN THE MOTHER?
YOU THINK SHE'S IN CAHOOTS WITH FISK SOMEHOW?
I'M PRETTY SURE THE KINGPIN HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH THIS.
I WAS CALLING ABOUT...
SOMETHING ELSE.
I SEE...
AND WHERE *IS* THE DEAR GIRL -- YOUR *'BETTER HALF'*?
KAREN? THAT'S... WELL, THAT'S WHAT I WAS CALLING YOU ABOUT.
YOUR GIRLFRIEND LEFT YOU AND YOU STARTED FEELING... *NOSTALGIC...* ABOUT US?
WE HAVEN'T SEEN ONE ANOTHER IN QUITE SOME TIME -- YOU HAVEN'T ACTUALLY TRIED TO *CONTACT* ME IN I CAN'T REMEMBER HOW LONG.
BUT THE LITTLE WOMAN SENDS YOU PACKING, AND SUDDENLY YOU REMEMBER MY NUMBER AFTER ALL THIS TIME...?
UH... WELL, THAT IS TO SAY... I DIDN'T MEAN...


YOU'LL NEVER CHANGE, MATTHEW.
YOU'RE SO UNABLE TO FACE THE FACT THAT -- HEROICS ASIDE -- YOU'RE JUST A *MAN...* NO DIFFERENT THAN THE REST.
MY SELF-RESPECT ALMOST DEMANDS THAT I PUMMEL YOU FOR YOUR PRESUMPTUOUS BOORISHNESS...
BUT UNLIKE YOURSELF, I CAN EMBRACE THE BAGGAGE OF MY OWN HUMANITY.
COUCH OR ROOF?
ZZP
AREN'T YOU FORGETTING SOMETHING?
I TRUST YOU KNOW WHAT TO DO WITH ONE OF THESE?
COULD YOU KEEP AN EYE ON IT FOR A BIT? I HAVE TO GO TO MY OFFICE.
I'M GOING TO CHECK OUT THE CITY'S HOSPITALS' BIRTH RECORDS FROM THE LAST FEW MONTHS -- SEE IF I CAN DIG UP ANYTHING ON THE MOTHER.
BUT...
I PROMISE, I WON'T BE LONG.
WOULD YOU MIND CHECKING ITS DIAPER, THOUGH?
I COULDN'T MUSTER UP THE GUTS TO CHANGE IT YET.
THANKS, 'TASHA.
BUT...
GOOD GOD -- I WAS AN *AVENGER!*


THE LAW OFFICES OF SHARPE, NELSON AND MURDOCK...
ZYSK, BRIAN DAVID. MALE. BORN AUGUST SECOND. FATHER: JOSEPH Q. -- AGE THIRTY-TWO; MOTHER: NANCI D. -- AGE TWENTY-NINE.
END OF LISTINGS.
SO MUCH FOR SAINT ANTHONY'S.
THAT'S THE TWO HUNDREDTH AND TWELFTH HOSPITAL'S RECORDS I'VE ACCESSED -- AND I'VE YET TO COME ACROSS A BIRTH RECORD THAT MATCHES THE BABY OR GWYNETH.
IRONICALLY, ALMOST ALL OF THEIR RECENT BIRTHS ALSO ACCOUNT FOR OVER HALF OF THEIR RECENT DEATHS.
SO MUCH CARNAGE, WITH NO POSSIBLE EXPLANATION -- AS IF ONE EXISTS THAT COULD EVER CONSOLE THE GRIEVING. ALL ANYONE CAN DO AT THIS POINT IS BRING THE GUILTY PARTIES TO JUSTICE.
I AND OTHERS LIKE ME SPEND MOST OF OUR LIVES PROTECTING THE INNOCENT -- BUT NONE OF US EVER THOUGHT OF DOING SOMETHING AS SIMPLE AS PERIODICALLY CHECKING IN ON ANY GIVEN HOSPITAL'S NEO-NATAL WARD.
SOMETIMES I WONDER IF I'M JUST A BANDAGE ON A CANCER.
MISTER MURDOCK?
YES, KIM?
YOUR ELEVEN THIRTY'S HERE.
I HAVE AN ELEVEN THIRTY?
YES, SIR. A NICHOLAS MACABES.
KIM -- THERE'S NOTHING HERE ON MY SCHEDULE ABOUT AN ELEVEN THIRTY.
ACCORDING TO MY SCHEDULE, IT WAS BOOKED WEEKS AGO -- THOUGH I DON'T RECALL PENCILING IT IN MYSELF. SHOULD I RESCHEDULE?
NO. SHOW HIM...
...IN.
GOOD OF YOU TO SEE ME, MISTER MURDOCK.
THE ROOM SEEMS TO HAVE SUDDENLY GOTTEN COLDER...

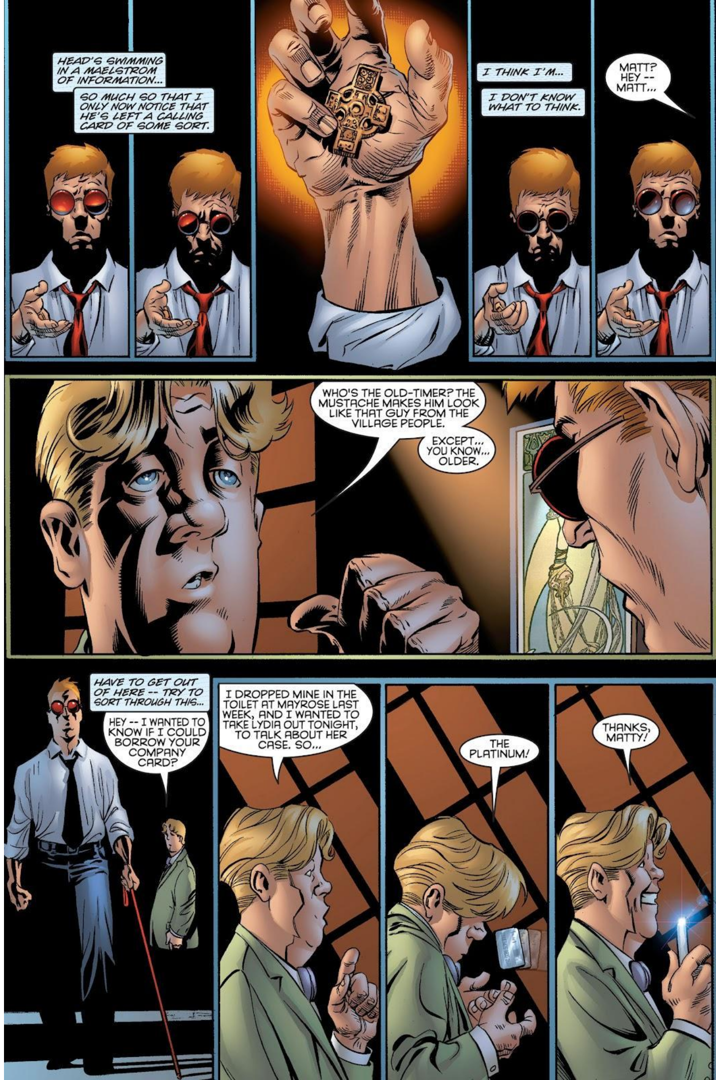

I'M NICHOLAS MACABES. YOUR ELEVEN THIRTY.
YOU'LL HAVE TO EXCUSE ME, MISTER MACABES -- I DON'T SEEM TO HAVE ANYTHING ABOUT YOUR CASE ON MY DESK.
YOU WOULDN'T, MISTER MURDOCK -- IT'S A SENSITIVE MATTER THAT'S DEVELOPED IN THE LAST TWENTY-FOUR HOURS.
I BELIEVE YOU HAVE IN YOUR CARE, A CHILD.
ARE YOU FROM SOCIAL SERVICES?
IN A FASHION -- IT'S SOCIETY I SERVE. SOCIETY AND THE GOOD OF THE WORLD AT LARGE.
I'M AFRAID YOU'VE LOST ME.
MISTER MURDOCK... MATTHEW -- I'M SURE I NEEDN'T INFORM YOU OF THE FORCES AT WORK IN THIS WORLD ON A DAILY BASIS THAT DEFY SENSIBLE EXPLANATION.
IN THE COURSE OF YOUR LIFETIME, YOU'VE SEEN...
...FIGURATIVELY, OF COURSE...
...WONDERS THAT'VE BECOME SO COMMONPLACE, YOUR RATIONAL MIND HAS SINCE STOPPED ANY ATTEMPTS AT PRODUCING VIABLE RESPONSES FOR THE ELEMENTARY INQUIRIES OF 'HOW', 'WHAT', AND 'WHY'. WHETHER IT BE THE UNFATHOMABLE CONUNDRUM OF A 'DEVOURER OF WORLDS'...


...OR THE SIMPLE QUESTION OF HOW A MAN CAN PRODUCE ICE FROM HIS HANDS, BEAMS OF PURE ENERGY FROM HIS EYES, OR ELASTICITY ON A MOLECULAR LEVEL FROM EVERY CELL IN HIS STRUCTURE...
...YOU -- LIKE MOST -- HAVE GIVEN UP ON LOOKING FOR SOLUTIONS TO THESE SCIENTIFIC MYSTERIES AND ACCEPTED THEM AS ROTE.
I WOULD ASK THAT YOU NOW EXTEND THAT FAITH IN *'WHAT IS'* TO A MATTER MORE... SPIRITUAL IN NATURE.
THAT BEING?
THE END OF TIME. THE APOCALYPSE.
I'LL PLAY ALONG, MISTER MACABES. THIS HAS WHAT TO DO WITH ME?
INTO YOUR SAFEKEEPING HAS BEEN PLACED THE MAIN COG IN WHAT IS TO BE THE MACHINATIONS OF THE END OF THE WORLD. THE INFANT.
YOU DON'T SAY.
MISTER MACABES, YOU'LL HAVE TO EXCUSE ME -- THERE'S A PILE OF WORK I'VE YET TO GET TO THAT'LL MEAN THE END OF THE WORLD FOR *ME* IF I DON'T GET THROUGH IT TODAY.
I UNDERSTAND YOUR RELUCTANCE -- AS GOOD-HUMORED AS IT IS PHRASED -- TO GRASP WHAT I'M IMPARTING, MATTHEW. HOWEVER, I'M AFRAID I DON'T HAVE TIME TO LEAD THIS HORSE TO WATER, SO TO SPEAK.
SUFFICE TO SAY, MY ORGANIZATION FOUND THE NOTION OF HANDING OVER THE ANTICHRIST TO A MAN WHO ADORNS HIMSELF IN A DEMON'S MANTLE SOMEWHAT TASTELESSLY VULGAR...
...NOT TO MENTION ON-THE-NOSE.
WHAT THE HELL IS GOING ON HERE?! WHO ARE YOU?! HOW DO YOU PEOPLE KNOW... ?!
RELEASE ME, COUNSELOR!


THIS IS MY ONLY GOOD SUIT.
YOU'RE BEING USED AS A PAWN, MATTHEW. THE FORCES MYSELF AND MY ORGANIZATION ARE WORKING TO STOP...
...HAVE SINGLED YOU OUT AS AN UNWITTING ACCOMPLICE IN THEIR NEFARIOUS DESIGNS.
YOU'RE A SOMEWHAT RELIGIOUS MAN, SO I ASK THAT YOU REACH BACK TO THE DAYS OF YOUR RELIGIOUS INSTRUCTION AND RECALL THE BOOK OF REVELATIONS.
THE ANTICHRIST IS THE HARBINGER OF THE END OF TIME, AND THAT HARBINGER HAS BEEN PLACED IN YOUR KEEPING, UNDER THE GUISE OF THE *"INFANT SAVIOR"*.
IS THAT NOT WHAT YOU WERE TOLD BY THE YOUNG WOMAN IN YOUR OFFICE YESTERDAY?
SOMETHING... SOMETHING LIKE THAT.
I CAN ASSURE YOU THAT THE CHILD IS THE VERY OPPOSITE OF A SAVIOR. WOULD A *"SAVIOR"* ALLOW SO MANY INNOCENTS TO DIE IN ITS NAME -- AS SO MANY HAVE OVER THE LAST WEEK IN THIS CITY'S HOSPITALS?
THE CHILD IS A MENACE -- A MAGGOT THAT WILL FESTER INTO THE DEATH OF THIS WORLD, SHOULD IT BE ALLOWED TO AGE.
AND WHILE I CAN APPRECIATE YOUR HESITANCY TO ACCEPT THIS DUE TO ITS OUTWARD APPEARANCE OF INNOCENCE, I WOULD ASK THAT YOU CALL UPON YOUR LACK OF SIGHT TO GET BEYOND WHAT MAY SEEM OBVIOUS...
...AND TAKE HEED OF WHAT I'M TELLING YOU... THIS FLAME MUST BE DOUSED BEFORE IT GROWS INTO A PYRE THAT WILL ENGULF ALL THAT YOU HOLD DEAR.
HIS HEARTBEAT REMAINS CONSTANT -- SOMEHOW, HE'S TELLING THE TRUTH.
BUT SO WAS GWYNETH... WASN'T SHE?
I'M SUDDENLY VERY BEFUDDLED... AND VERY SCARED.
YOU'RE ASKING ME TO TAKE ITS LIFE?!
I WOULDN'T REQUEST OF YOU SUCH A BURDEN -- THAT IS FOR MY ORGANIZATION TO UNDERTAKE.
WHAT THE *HELL* IS THIS ORGANIZATION YOU *KEEP TALKING ABOUT?!*
ONE WHOSE SOLE PURPOSE IS TO SEE THAT THE HUMAN RACE ENDURES. SHEOL.
HOW COME I'VE NEVER HEARD OF IT?!
BECAUSE SOME CONCEPTS CANNOT BE GRASPED AS EASILY AS OTHERS.


THE UNSEEN WORLD HAS ALWAYS BEEN BEYOND HUMAN COMPREHENSION MATTHEW. IT OFFERS NO ANSWERS, AND RESISTS THE CATEGORIZATION THAT HUMANITY DEMANDS. TO REVEAL OURSELVES... OUR TRUE FORMS... OUR EFFORTS... TO A MIND INCAPABLE OF GRASPING THE SPIRITUAL WOULD BE TO CONDEMN SAID MIND TO MADNESS.
BUT SHEOL HAS BEEN HERE FOR YOU -- LONG BEFORE YOU CRAWLED FROM THE MUCK. WE'VE GUIDED YOUR DEVELOPMENT, AND SET IN MOTION THE MEANS BY WHICH YOU MAY CONTINUE AS A SPECIES.
WE EMBODY YOUR HOPES AND IDEALS, AND WHEN NECESSARY, PROVIDE YOU WTH THE GUARDIANS THAT AID IN KEEPING YOU FROM HARM...
"... WHETHER IT BE PROMPTING RADIOACTIVE INSECTS TO STRIKE...
"... OR GAMMA BOMBS TO EXPLODE IN THE COMPANY OF THOSE WHO CAN RISE TO THE CHALLENGE OF PROTECTING HUMANITY...
"... OR SIMPLY HURLING AN ISOTOPE IN THE PROPER DIRECTION.
"THE CHILD IS EVIL -- THAT MUCH I HOPE I'VE IMPARTED TO YOU, IF NOTHING ELSE. AND THE LONGER IT'S IN YOUR CARE, THE MORE YOUR LIFE WILL UNDERGO GRAVE UPHEAVALS."
UPHEAVALS?


EVIL TAINTS ALL IT TOUCHES. THE ONES YOU HOLD DEAREST -- YOU RISK THEM BY HARBORING THE ABOMINATION.
I TELL YOU THIS NOT AS A THREAT, BUT AS A WARNING -- DELIVER THE CHILD UNTO US SO THAT YOU MAY NOT JEOPARDIZE THOSE YOU LOVE.
FORTY-EIGHT HOURS, MATTHEW -- I CAN OFFER YOU THAT MUCH TIME TO COLLECT YOUR THOUGHTS ON THE MATTER.
I TRUST YOU'LL MAKE THE WISEST CHOICE -- FOR YOURSELF, FOR US, AND FOR YOUR WORLD.
BUT I SHOULD ADD THAT IF THE FORCES BEHIND THIS DIVINE THAT YOU HAVE KNOWLEDGE OF THEIR DUPLICITY, THEY MAY SEEK TO DO YOU HARM.
AND AT THAT POINT...
...NOT EVEN A LEGION OF ANGELS CAN RESCUE YOU FROM HARM.


HEAD'S SWIMMING IN A MAELSTROM OF INFORMATION...
SO MUCH SO THAT I ONLY NOW NOTICE THAT HE'S LEFT A CALLING CARD OF SOME SORT.
I THINK I'M...
I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO THINK.
MATT? HEY -- MATT...
WHO'S THE OLD-TIMER? THE MUSTACHE MAKES HIM LOOK LIKE THAT GUY FROM THE VILLAGE PEOPLE.
EXCEPT... YOU KNOW... OLDER.
HAVE TO GET OUT OF HERE -- TRY TO SORT THROUGH THIS...
HEY -- I WANTED TO KNOW IF I COULD BORROW YOUR COMPANY CARD?
I DROPPED MINE IN THE TOILET AT MAYROSE LAST WEEK, AND I WANTED TO TAKE LYDIA OUT TONIGHT, TO TALK ABOUT HER CASE. SO...
THE PLATINUM!
THANKS, MATTY!


FISK.
IT HAS TO BE FISK.
IT'S AN APPROACH I NEVER WOULD'VE EXPECTED FROM HIM, BUT IT'S THE ONLY RATIONAL EXPLANATION I CAN...
THE ONLY... RATIONAL...
"SOME CONCEPTS CANNOT BE GRASPED AS EASILY AS OTHERS," HE SAID.
NO.
THIS IS SOMETHING I CAN'T SLAP A SIMPLE LABEL ON AND FILE CONVENIENTLY UNDER KINGPI...
POP
ALREADY NOT THINKING STRAIGHT.
THE THUG DOESN'T HELP MATTERS MUCH.
NOT SUFFICIENTLY COWED BY THE KNEE DISLOCATION THAT GOT IN THE WAY OF HIS ATTEMPT TO MUG ME, HE OFFERS UP SOME SLANDER.
SOMETHING ABOUT MY MOTHER...


SOMETHING UNCALLED FOR...
THAT MAKES ME REALIZE...
SOMETIMES, I'M FAR TOO TOLERANT.
WHAT IS IT WITH YOU PEOPLE?
HAVEN'T I GIVEN YOU ENOUGH OF ME?
YOU WANT TO INVADE EVERY CORNER OF MY LIFE...
LEAVING ME NOTHING SACRED...
SPAKK
WELL, I'VE HAD IT WITH ALL OF YOU!
YOU'RE ALL GOING TO PA...
HEY MISTER...
ARE YOU GONNA KILL THAT GUY?
OH, GOD...
WHAT AM I DOING?
HEY MISTER -- ARE YOU OKAY?
WHAT KIND OF MUGGER WEARS A SUIT?

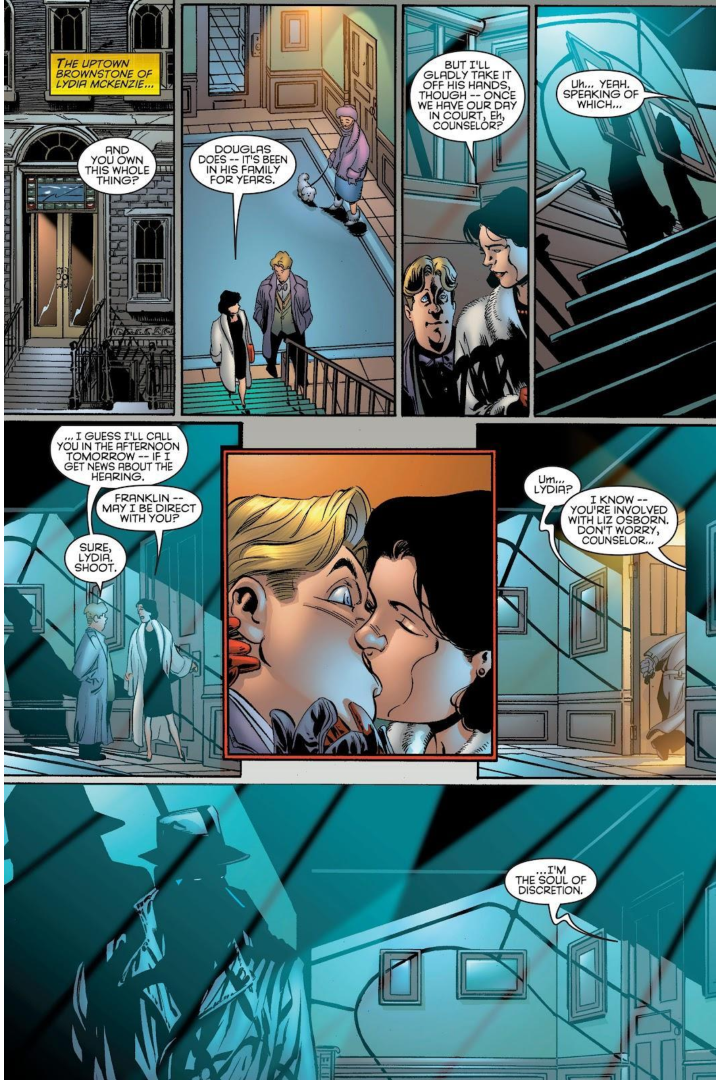

IT DOESN'T TAKE A PERSON VERY LONG TO SLIP INTO A ROUTINE --
-- TRANSITION TENDS TO BE ALMOST UNNOTICEABLE TO THE PARTY INVOLVED.
GWYNETH HAD COME TO COUNT ON THE CRUSH OF NINE-TO-FIVERS IN THE SUBWAYS TO ACT AS THE CAMOUFLAGE SHE NEEDED TO ELUDE HER PURSUERS.
AND AS MUCH AS IT KILLED HER TO TURN THE CHILD OVER TO A STRANGER -- ALBEIT ONE HAND-PICKED BY THE ANGELS -- AT LEAST NOW IT WAS EVEN EASIER TO EVADE DETECTION...
NO MATTER WHAT THE CIRCUMSTANCES -- DIRE OR OTHERWISE --
HUMAN NATURE DICTATES WE ADAPT TO REPETITION WITH RELATIVE EASE.
THE REWARD FOR ALL THIS SACRIFICE, SHE REASONED, WAS, THAT SOONER OR LATER, SHE'D BE ABLE TO RETRIEVE HER CHILD FROM ITS TEMPORARY PROTECTOR -- GOD WOULD HAVE TO GRANT THAT PAIR THAT MUCH. GOD OWED IT TO THEM.
THEN, PERHAPS, SHE COULD MOVE UPSTATE -- MAKE A NEW LIFE FOR HER AND THE BABY; FALL INTO YET ANOTHER NEW ROUTINE... ONE THAT DIDN'T INVOLVE RUNNING AND HIDING.
NO -- IT DOESN'T TAKE A PERSON VERY LONG TO SLIP INTO A ROUTINE...
...BUT WHAT ONE NEVER REALLY THINKS ABOUT...
...IS HOW THEIR ROUTINE CAN BE OBSERVED BY OTHERS.
WELL PLAYED, MISTER GABRIEL. I OWE YOU FIVE DOLLARS.
YOU'VE GIVEN US QUITE A RUN FOR OUR MONEY, YOUNG HARLOT.
BUT YOU MAY BREATHE EASIER NOW...
THE CHASE IS ENDED.

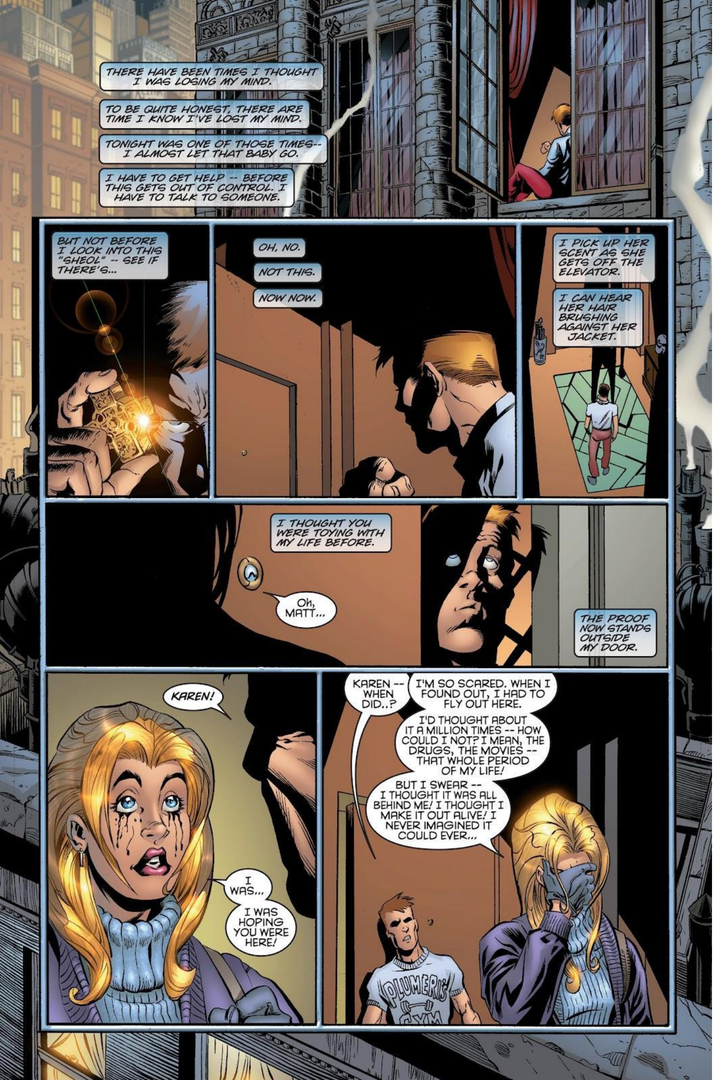

MERCIFULLY, THE CITY IS QUIET TONIGHT. GIVES ME TIME TO THINK, AND WHAT I'M THINKING RIGHT ABOUT NOW ISN'T PRETTY.
YOU WOULD DO THIS TO ME, WOULDN'T YOU?
I HAVEN'T HAD ENOUGH PAIN IN MY LIFE, AND NOW YOU THROW ME INTO THE MIDDLE OF THIS?
I'M NOT ONE OF THOSE FOUR-BUCK-AN-HOUR BABYSITTERS, RED -- MY PRICE RANGE IS A LITTLE OUT OF YOUR LEAGUE.
HOW WAS IT?
REMINDS ME OF TAKING CARE OF TONY, BACK IN HIS GLASS-TIPPING DAYS.
I HAVE TO CONFESS, THOUGH -- IT'S STIRRED UP ALL SORTS OF MATERNAL INSTINCTS.
FOR THE FIRST TIME IN MY LIFE I HEAR MY 'BIOLOGICAL CLOCK' TICKING.
IGNORE IT. IT'S A DARK WORLD -- NO PLACE FOR A CHILD.
OH, I'M SURE YOU EXIST NOW...
YOU EXIST TO DEVISE A NEVER-ENDING SERIES OF ANGUISHES AND TORMENTS...
...AND THEN YOU HURL THEM MY WAY -- JUST TO SEE HOW I REACT.
WELL, I'M THROUGH PLAYING YOUR GAMES.
LET'S SEE HOW YOU REACT TO THIS ONE...
AH, BUT THAT'S WHERE WE COME IN, ISN'T IT? NONE OF US DON THESE COSTUMES MERELY TO MAKE A FASHION STATEMENT, DO WE?
WELL, EXCEPT MAYBE DAZZLER BACK IN THE OLD DAYS.
NATASHA -- GIVE ME THE BABY.


IT'S AN OLD QUANDARY -- FIRST YEAR PSYCH STUFF, REALLY. BUT...
IF YOU KNEW WHAT HITLER WOULD EVENTUALLY DO, WOULD YOU HAVE KILLED HIM AS A CHILD?
DEFINITELY NOT. I'D HAVE TAKEN HIM FROM HIS ENVIRONMENT, MAYBE --
TRIED TO RAISE HIM DIFFERENTLY. I BELIEVE IT'S NURTURE -- NOT NATURE.
OF COURSE YOU DO, NATASHA -- YOU HAVE THAT LUXURY.
goo!
TO BE HONEST, THOUGH -- A QUESTION LIKE THAT FROM A MAN HOLDING AN INFANT WORRIES ME.
YOU WANT A LEAP OF FAITH?
TRY THIS ONE.
MATTHEW!
NO!
PFF


UNFF!
ARE YOU INSANE!?
PULLING YOU AND THAT... THING... UP? I MUST BE.
FLPP
TEN SECONDS -- EXPLAIN OR I SNAP IT.
THE KID... IS THE... ANTICHRIST!

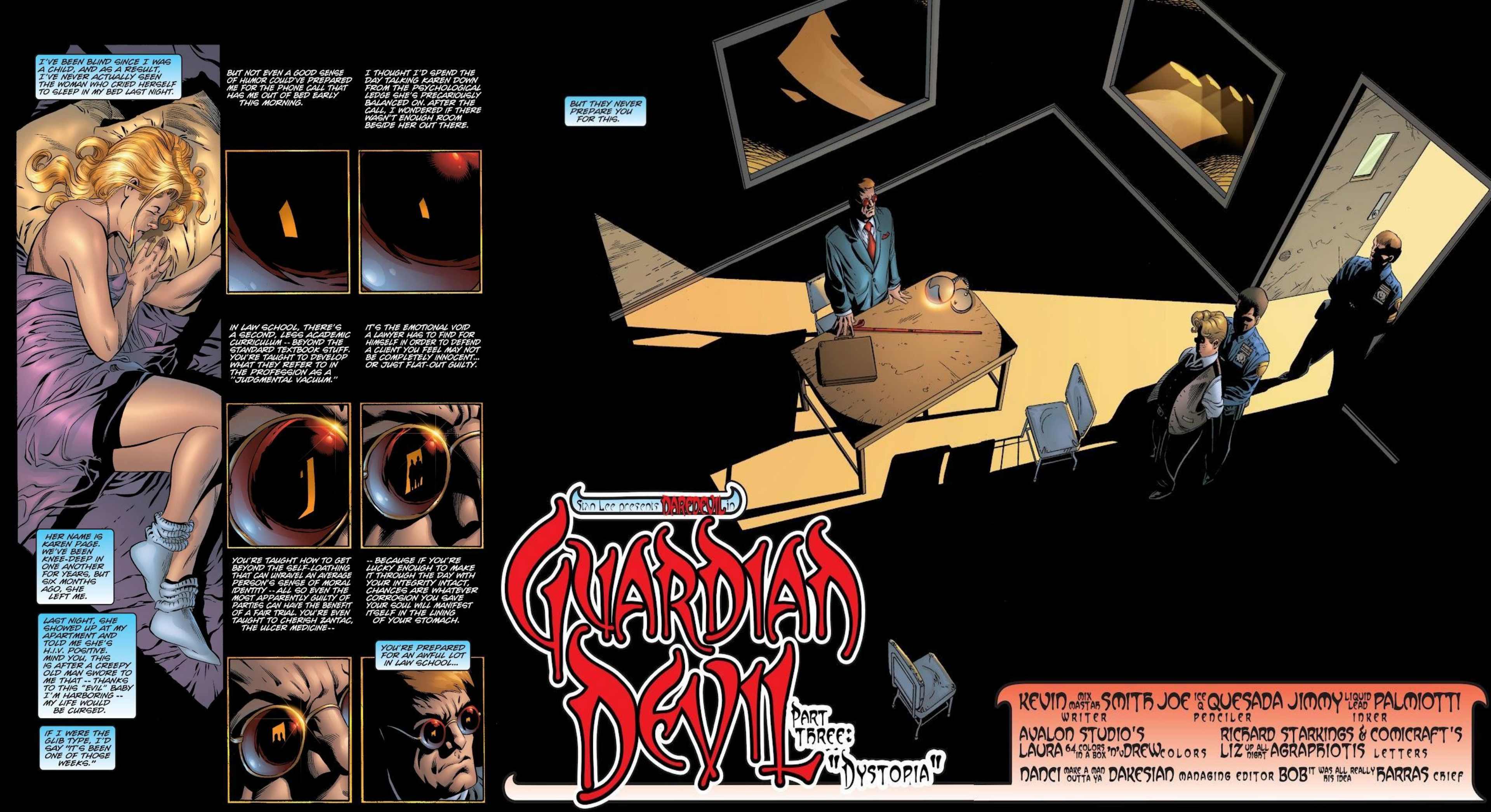

THE ANTI..?
A MAN CAME TO ME TODAY. HE KNEW THINGS ABOUT THE CHILD. HE SAID IT'S THE HARBINGER OF THE END TIMES.
AND YOU BELIEVED HIM?!
HE KNEW I WAS DAREDEVIL!
HAHAHA
Oh, MURDOCK -- THE JOB'S REALLY GETTING TO YOU.
HAHA
SO DID THE GIRL, YOU SAID!
I'M BEING USED, NATASHA! YES, IT'S A BABY -- BUT HE'S HERE TO END THE WORLD!
SHE.
WHAT?
SHE. IT'S A GIRL.
YOU'RE SURE?
EITHER THAT OR HE'S EXTREMELY NOT WELL-ENDOWED. BUT THAT HAS NO BEARING ON WHAT JUST HAPPENED.
MY GOD... WHAT AM I DOING?
HONESTLY, MATTHEW -- I HAVEN'T A CLUE. I'M BEYOND SHOCKED. I DON'T THINK YOU'RE SAFE TO BE AROUND RIGHT NOW -- CERTAINLY NOT AROUND THE CHILD AT LEAST.
I SUGGEST YOU LIE DOWN OR SOMETHING, BUT DO NOT GO OUT THIS EVENING. HELL'S KITCHEN CAN SURVIVE A FEW HOURS WITHOUT ITS 'GUARDIAN DEVIL'...
...A POSITION I'M NOT SURE YOU'RE QUALIFIED TO HOLD AFTER TONIGHT!
GOD HELP ME -- NEITHER AM I.


THE UPTOWN BROWNSTONE OF LYDIA MCKENZIE...
AND YOU OWN THIS WHOLE THING?
DOUGLAS DOES -- IT'S BEEN IN HIS FAMILY FOR YEARS.
BUT I'LL GLADLY TAKE IT OFF HIS HANDS, THOUGH -- ONCE WE HAVE OUR DAY IN COURT, EH, COUNSELOR?
Uh... YEAH. SPEAKING OF WHICH...
...I GUESS I'LL CALL YOU IN THE AFTERNOON TOMORROW -- IF I GET NEWS ABOUT THE HEARING.
FRANKLIN -- MAY I BE DIRECT WITH YOU?
SURE, LYDIA. SHOOT.
Um... LYDIA?
I KNOW -- YOU'RE INVOLVED WITH LIZ OSBORN. DON'T WORRY, COUNSELOR...
...I'M THE SOUL OF DISCRETION.


THERE HAVE BEEN TIMES I THOUGHT I WAS LOSING MY MIND.
TO BE QUITE HONEST, THERE ARE TIME I KNOW I'VE LOST MY MIND.
TONIGHT WAS ONE OF THOSE TIMES-- I ALMOST LET THAT BABY GO.
I HAVE TO GET HELP -- BEFORE THIS GETS OUT OF CONTROL. I HAVE TO TALK TO SOMEONE.
BUT NOT BEFORE I LOOK INTO THIS "SHEOL" -- SEE IF THERE'S...
OH, NO.
NOT THIS.
NOW NOW.
I PICK UP HER SCENT AS SHE GETS OFF THE ELEVATOR.
I CAN HEAR HER HAIR BRUSHING AGAINST HER JACKET.
I THOUGHT YOU WERE TOYING WITH MY LIFE BEFORE.
Oh, MATT...
THE PROOF NOW STANDS OUTSIDE MY DOOR.
KAREN!
I WAS...
I WAS HOPING YOU WERE HERE!
KAREN -- WHEN DID..?
I'M SO SCARED. WHEN I FOUND OUT, I HAD TO FLY OUT HERE.
I'D THOUGHT ABOUT IT A MILLION TIMES -- HOW COULD I NOT? I MEAN, THE DRUGS, THE MOVIES -- THAT WHOLE PERIOD OF MY LIFE!
BUT I SWEAR -- I THOUGHT IT WAS ALL BEHIND ME! I THOUGHT I MAKE IT OUT ALIVE! I NEVER IMAGINED IT COULD EVER...
PLUMERI'S GYM

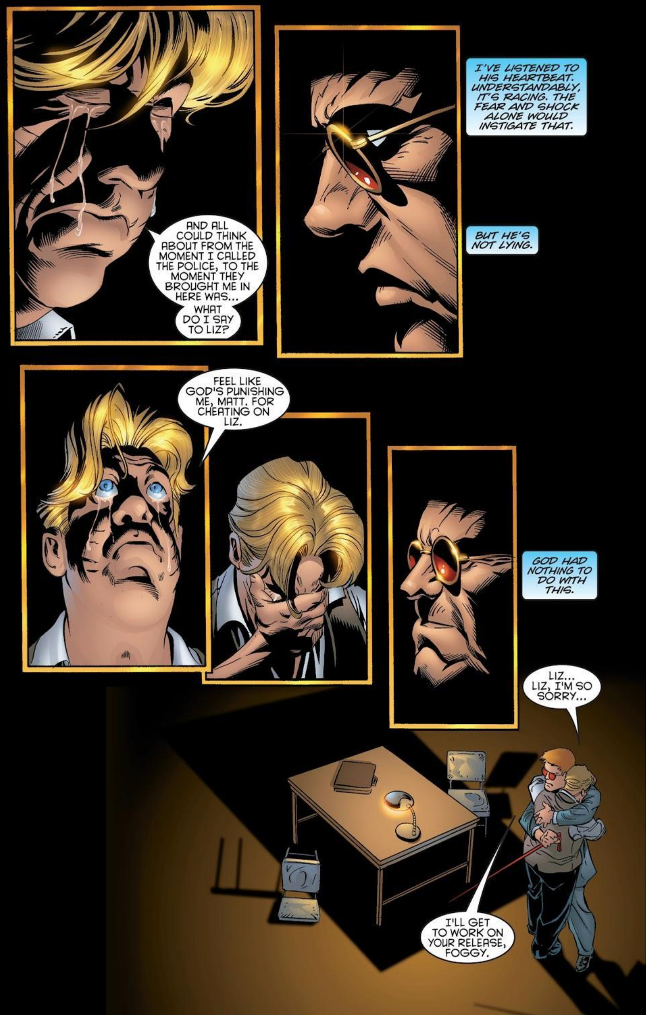

GOOD GOD, KAREN -- SLOW...
GOD?! FORGET YOU AND YOUR GOD, AFTER WHAT HE'S DONE TO ME!
WHAT'S THE MATTER, KAREN?! TELL ME!
I'M... I'M SORRY... SO SORRY... I...
MATT...
I HAVE AIDS!
WHEN IT RAINS, IT POURS.


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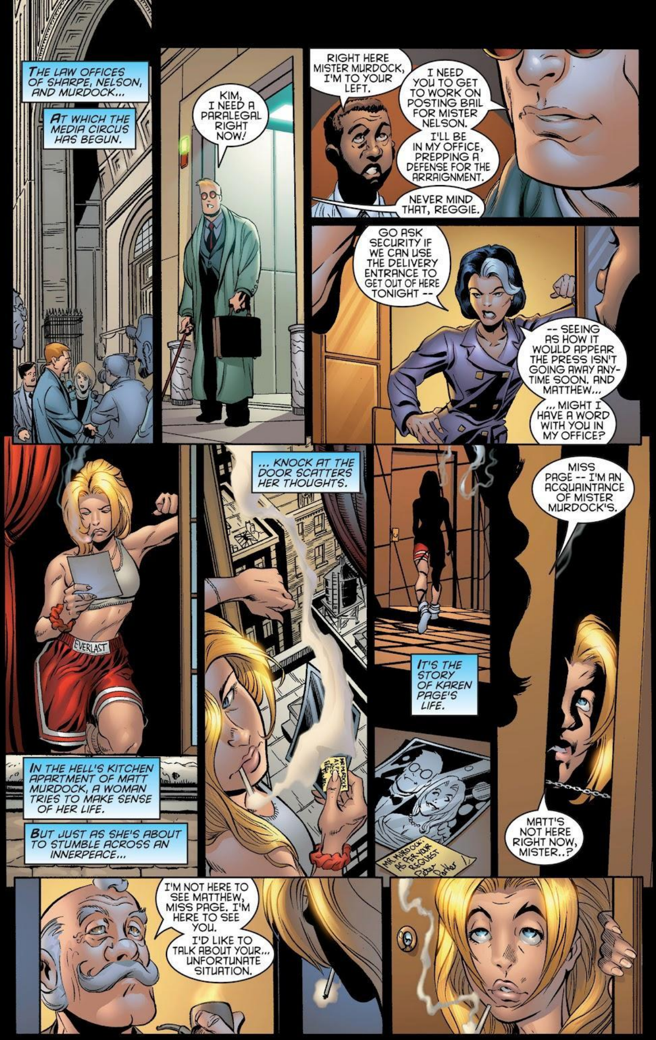

I'VE BEEN BLIND SINCE I WAS A CHILD, AND AS A RESULT, I'VE NEVER ACTUALLY SEEN THE WOMAN WHO CRIED HERSELF TO SLEEP IN MY BED LAST NIGHT.
HER NAME IS KAREN PAGE. WE'VE BEEN KNEE-DEEP IN ONE ANOTHER FOR YEARS, BUT SIX MONTHS AGO, SHE LEFT ME.
LAST NIGHT, SHE SHOWED UP AT MY APARTMENT AND TOLD ME SHE'S H.I.V. POSITIVE. MIND YOU, THIS IS AFTER A CREEPY OLD MAN SWORE TO ME THAT -- THANKS TO THIS "EVIL" BABY I'M HARBORING -- MY LIFE WOULD BE CURSED.
IF I WERE THE GLIB TYPE, I'D SAY "IT'S BEEN ONE OF THOSE WEEKS."
BUT NOT EVEN A GOOD SENSE OF HUMOR COULD'VE PREPARED ME FOR THE PHONE CALL THAT HAS ME OUT OF BED EARLY THIS MORNING.
I THOUGHT I'D SPEND THE DAY TALKING KAREN DOWN FROM THE PSYCHOLOGICAL LEDGE SHE'S PRECARIOUSLY BALANCED ON. AFTER THE CALL, I WONDERED IF THERE WASN'T ENOUGH ROOM BESIDE HER OUT THERE.
IN LAW SCHOOL, THERE'S A SECOND, LESS ACADEMIC CURRICULUM -- BEYOND THE STANDARD TEXTBOOK STUFF. YOU'RE TAUGHT TO DEVELOP WHAT THEY REFER TO IN THE PROFESSION AS A "JUDGMENTAL VACUUM."
IT'S THE EMOTIONAL VOID A LAWYER HAS TO FIND FOR HIMSELF IN ORDER TO DEFEND A CLIENT YOU FEEL MAY NOT BE COMPLETELY INNOCENT... OR JUST FLAT-OUT GUILTY.
YOU'RE TAUGHT HOW TO GET BEYOND THE SELF-LOATHING THAT CAN UNRAVEL AN AVERAGE PERSON'S SENSE OF MORAL IDENTITY -- ALL SO EVEN THE MOST APPARENTLY GUILTY OF PARTIES CAN HAVE THE BENEFIT OF A FAIR TRIAL. YOU'RE EVEN TAUGHT TO CHERISH ZANTAC, THE ULCER MEDICINE--
-- BECAUSE IF YOU'RE LUCKY ENOUGH TO MAKE IT THROUGH THE DAY WITH YOUR INTEGRITY INTACT, CHANCES ARE WHATEVER CORROSION YOU SAVE YOUR SOUL WILL MANIFEST ITSELF IN THE LINING OF YOUR STOMACH.
YOU'RE PREPARED FOR AN AWFUL LOT IN LAW SCHOOL...
BUT THEY NEVER PREPARE YOU FOR THIS.
Stan Lee presents DAREDEVIL in
GUARDIAN DEVIL
PART THREE: "DYSTOPIA"
KEVIN MIX MASTAH SMITH WRITER JOE ICE Q QUESADA PENCILER JIMMY LIQUID LEAD PALMIOTTI INKER
AVALON STUDIO'S LAURA 64 COLORS IN A BOX 'N' DREW COLORS
RICHARD STARKINGS & COMICRAFT'S LIZ UP ALL NIGHT AGRAPHIOTIS LETTERS
NANCI MAKE A MAN OUTTA YA DAKESIAN MANAGING EDITOR BOB IT WAS ALL REALLY HIS IDEA HARRAS CHIEF


MATT -- REMEMBER TERRENCE FLANAGAN? THE GUY WE REFUSED TO DEFEND IN THAT STABBING CASE?
WELL, I SPENT LAST NIGHT TRYING NOT TO BE *'Mrs. TERRENCE FLANAGAN'*.
FOGGY... WHAT HAPPENED?
I... I'M NOT SURE, MATT.
"I TOOK LYDIA McKENZIE OUT -- TO DISCUSS HER CASE OVER DINNER, AND...
"...WELL...
"...ONE THING LED TO ANOTHER.
"IT ALL HAPPENED SO FAST.
"AND THAT'S WHEN THINGS GOT...
"...WEIRD."


"IT WASN'T HUMAN, MATT. IT CLAWED MY FACE...
"... AND THEN HURLED ITSELF THROUGH THE BEDROOM WINDOW.
"BUT WHEN I LOOKED BELOW, I DIDN'T SEE THAT THING, I SAW LYDIA -- DEAD ON THE GROUND!
"THAT'S WHEN I CALLED THE COPS...
"... WHO FOUND IT HARD TO BELIEVE MY STORY.
"AND IN A WORLD WHERE THERE'S BEEN FAR STRANGER PHENOMENONA...
"I WAS HAULED OFF FOR MURDER ONE."



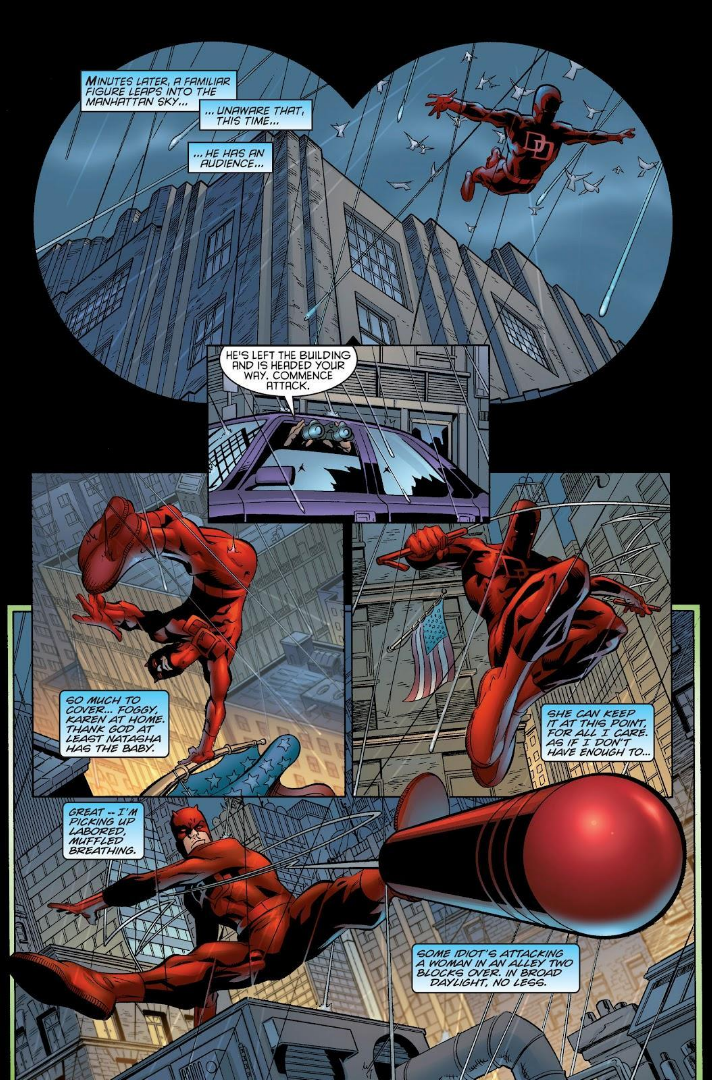
AND ALL COULD THINK ABOUT FROM THE MOMENT I CALLED THE POLICE, TO THE MOMENT THEY BROUGHT ME IN HERE WAS... WHAT DO I SAY TO LIZ?
I'VE LISTENED TO HIS HEARTBEAT. UNDERSTANDABLY, IT'S RACING. THE FEAR AND SHOCK ALONE WOULD INSTIGATE THAT.
BUT HE'S NOT LYING.
FEEL LIKE GOD'S PUNISHING ME, MATT. FOR CHEATING ON LIZ.
GOD HAD NOTHING TO DO WITH THIS.
LIZ... LIZ, I'M SO SORRY...
I'LL GET TO WORK ON YOUR RELEASE, FOGGY.



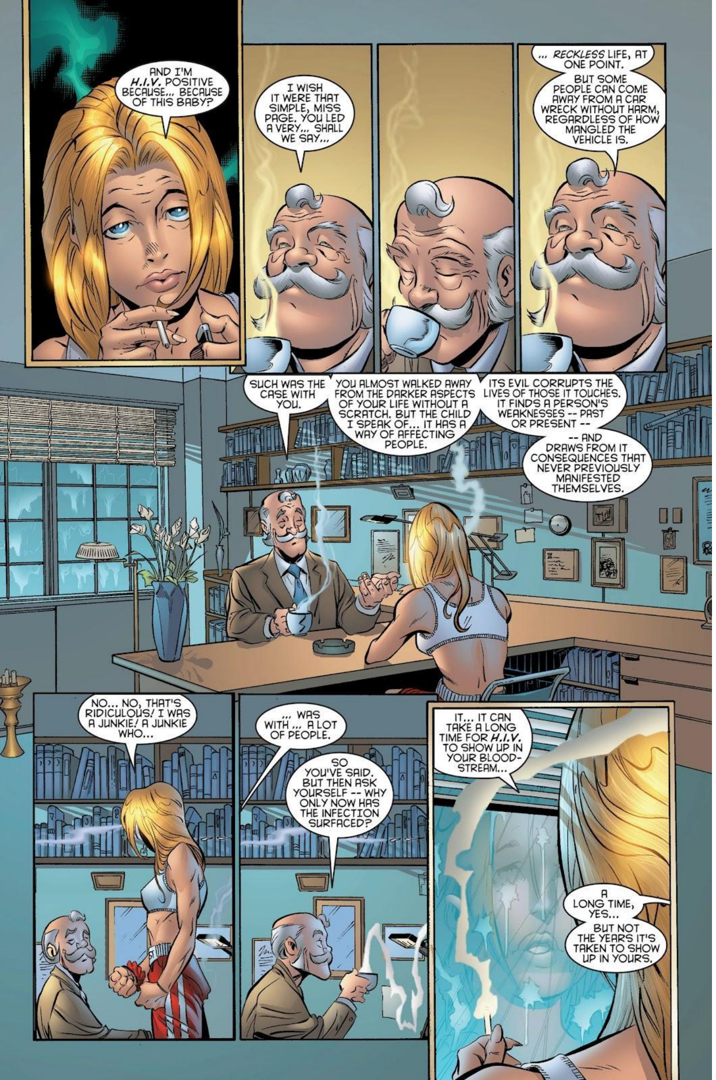
THE LAW OFFICES OF SHARPE, NELSON, AND MURDOCK...
AT WHICH THE MEDIA CIRCUS HAS BEGUN.
KIM, I NEED A PARALEGAL RIGHT NOW!
RIGHT HERE MISTER MURDOCK, I'M TO YOUR LEFT.
I NEED YOU TO GET TO WORK ON POSTING BAIL FOR MISTER NELSON.
I'LL BE IN MY OFFICE, PREPPING A DEFENSE FOR THE ARRAIGNMENT.
NEVER MIND THAT, REGGIE.
GO ASK SECURITY IF WE CAN USE THE DELIVERY ENTRANCE TO GET OUT OF HERE TONIGHT --
-- SEEING AS HOW IT WOULD APPEAR THE PRESS ISN'T GOING AWAY ANY-TIME SOON. AND MATTHEW...
... MIGHT I HAVE A WORD WITH YOU IN MY OFFICE?
EVERLAST
IN THE HELL'S KITCHEN APARTMENT OF MATT MURDOCK, A WOMAN TRIES TO MAKE SENSE OF HER LIFE.
BUT JUST AS SHE'S ABOUT TO STUMBLE ACROSS AN INNERPEACE...
... KNOCK AT THE DOOR SCATTERS HER THOUGHTS.
IT'S THE STORY OF KAREN PAGE'S LIFE.
MISS PAGE -- I'M AN ACQUAINTANCE OF MISTER MURDOCK'S.
MATT'S NOT HERE RIGHT NOW, MISTER..?
I'M NOT HERE TO SEE MATTHEW, MISS PAGE. I'M HERE TO SEE YOU.
I'D LIKE TO TALK ABOUT YOUR... UNFORTUNATE SITUATION.

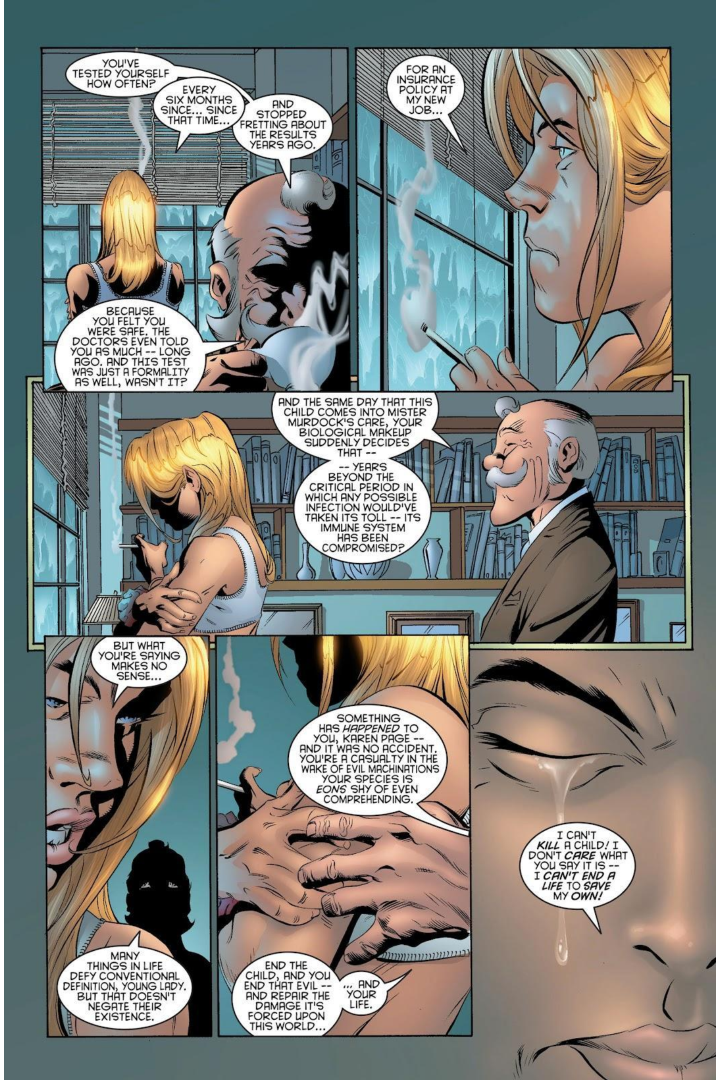

WE'RE A LAW FIRM, MATTHEW -- AND A HIGH-PROFILE ONE AT THAT! A SCANDAL LIKE THIS CAN BRING THIS OFFICE DOWN FASTER THAN THE PRESS CAN GOSSIP ABOUT IT!
AND YOU THINK FIRING FOGGY'S GOING TO QUELL THAT?!?
CUTTING HIM LOOSE?!? WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?!?
FIRING FRANKLIN BEFORE HIS ARREST WOULD'VE PROTECTED US FROM THE CRISIS WE NOW FIND OURSELVES IN THE MIDDLE OF.
BUT SINCE WE DIDN'T KNOW HE WAS A RAPIST YESTERDAY...
ARE YOU OUT OF YOUR MIND, LADY?!? HE'S YOUR SON! YOU KNOW HE'S INNOCENT!
ALL I KNOW IS THIS ARREST AND THE CHARGES IT CARRIES WITH IT POTENTIALLY PREJUDICES EVERY JURY IN ALL OUR CLIENTS' CASES AGAINST US...
... JEOPARDIZES THE FUTURE OF THIS FIRM, AND SULLIES MY NAME.
CAN'T AFFORD MYSELF THE LUXURY OF ENTERTAINING ONE OF THOSE OPTIONS, LET ALONE ALL THREE!
SWEET CHRISTMAS, SHARPE -- I THOUGHT YOU WERE COLD IN THE PAST! BUT YOUR OWN FLESH AND BLOOD..!

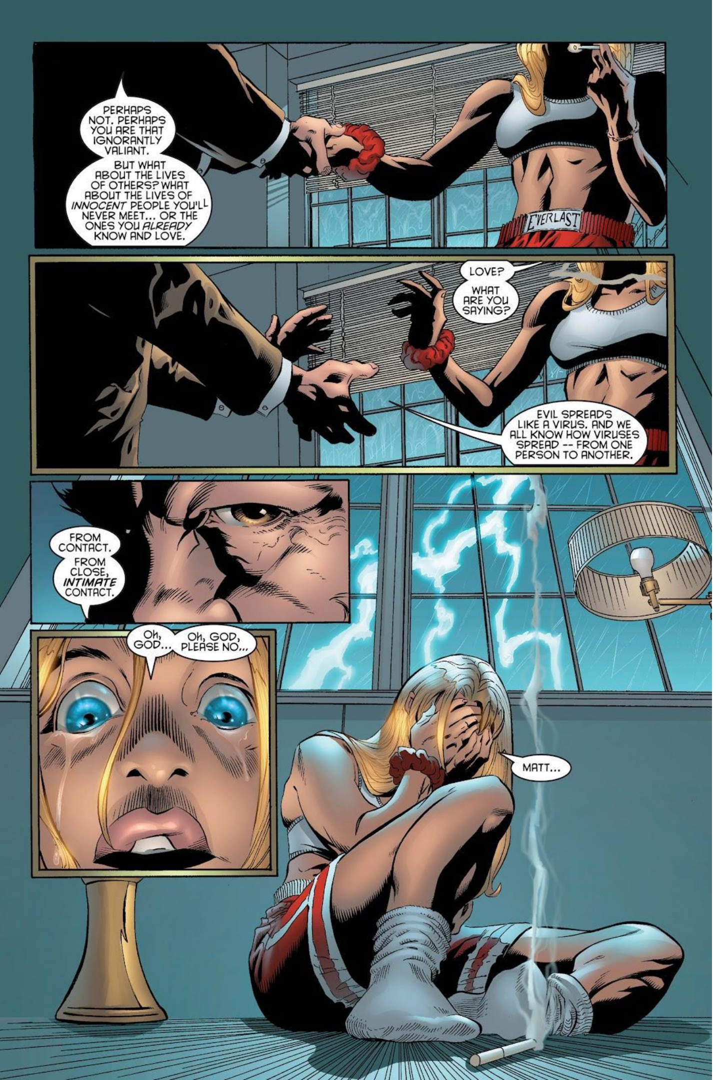

YOU DON'T THINK I HAVEN'T AGONIZED OVER THAT ALREADY?!
YOU DON'T THINK I HAVEN'T SPENT THE MORNING IN TEARS OVER WHAT'S HAPPENING TO MY SON?!? YOU DON'T THINK I'D DO EVERYTHING IN MY POWER TO CLEAR HIM IF I COULD?!?
BUT I HAVE NO CHOICE. I CAN'T RISK LOSING EVERYTHING I'VE BUILT OVER IMAGINED APRON STRINGS.
I'VE BEEN A LAWYER LONGER THAN I'VE BEEN A MOTHER TO FRANKLIN NELSON -- IT'S ALL I KNOW HOW TO BE AT THIS POINT. AND AS A LAWYER, AS A PROFESSIONAL... THIS IS THE ONLY COURSE I CAN SEE TO TAKE.
NICE SPEECH. I HAVE TO GO, ROSALIND -- HAVE TO FIGURE OUT HOW TO PROVE MY PARTNER'S INNOCENCE.
I'M AFRAID YOU CAN'T. I'M LETTING HIM GO, MATT -- NOT YOU. AND I HAVE TO CUT ALL HIS TIES TO THIS FIRM.
YOU'RE SAYING I CAN'T DEFEND HIM?!?
I'M SAYING THAT NONE OF THIS FIRM'S RESOURCES ARE GOING TO BE AT YOUR DISPOSAL IN THIS CASE.
THEN I QUIT!
SLAM

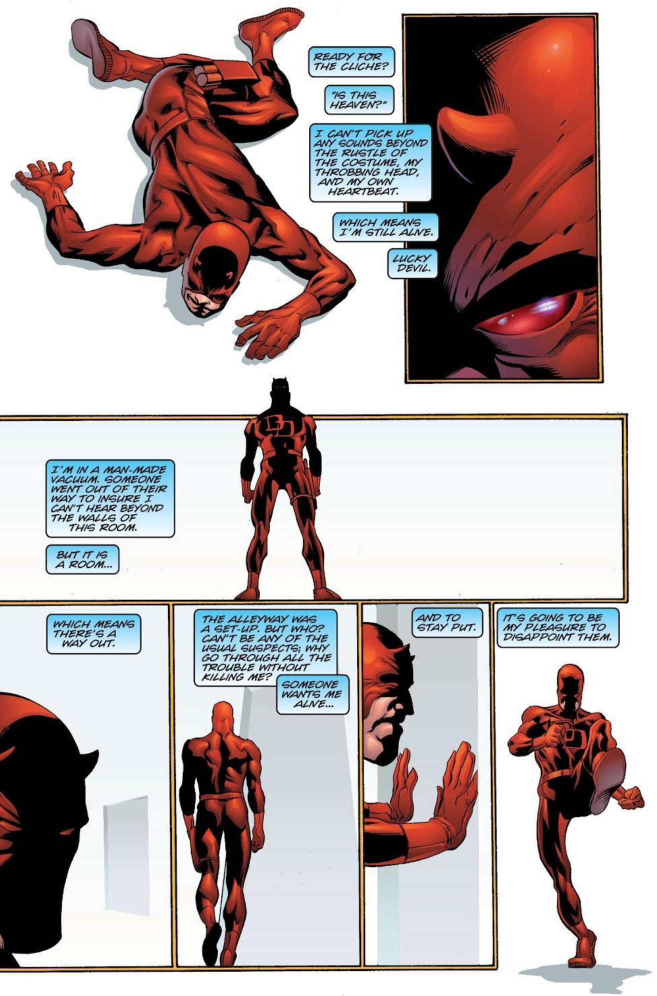

MINUTES LATER, A FAMILIAR FIGURE LEAPS INTO THE MANHATTAN SKY...
...UNAWARE THAT, THIS TIME...
...HE HAS AN AUDIENCE...
HE'S LEFT THE BUILDING AND IS HEADED YOUR WAY. COMMENCE ATTACK.
SO MUCH TO COVER... FOGGY. KAREN AT HOME. THANK GOD AT LEAST NATASHA HAS THE BABY.
SHE CAN KEEP IT AT THIS POINT, FOR ALL I CARE. AS IF I DON'T HAVE ENOUGH TO...
GREAT -- I'M PICKING UP LABORED, MUFFLED BREATHING.
SOME IDIOT'S ATTACKING A WOMAN IN AN ALLEY TWO BLOCKS OVER. IN BROAD DAYLIGHT, NO LESS.

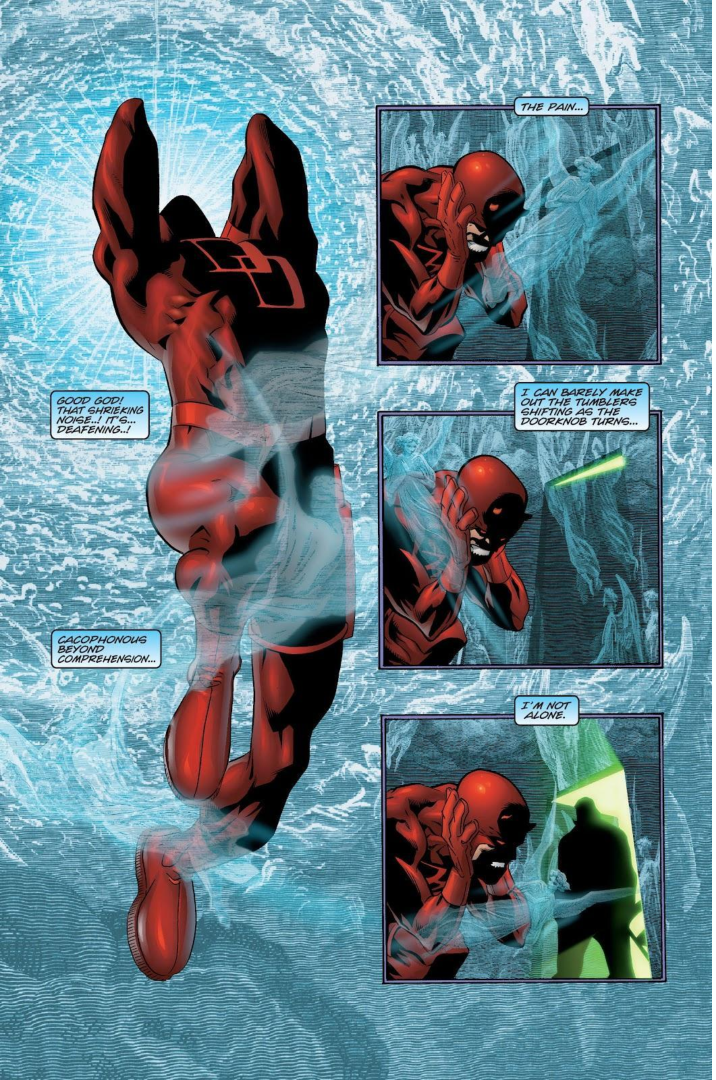

THIS I DON'T NEED RIGHT NOW.
OOOFF!
GIVE ME A REASON TO VENT MY FRUSTRATION, YOU...
FFUP
DID YOU REMEMBER TO BRING THE ICE LIKE I ASKED?
THAT BAD?
YOU'VE SEEN HOW THESE PEOPLE SWOOP DOWN FROM BUILDING-TOPS.
I TAKE IT HE'S SUBDUED.
AT THE EXPENSE OF MY NECK AND BACK, YES. BRING THE VAN AROUND. AND PREP ME AN ICE-PACK.


AND I'M H.I.V. POSITIVE BECAUSE... BECAUSE OF THIS BABY?
I WISH IT WERE THAT SIMPLE, MISS PAGE. YOU LED A VERY... SHALL WE SAY...
... RECKLESS LIFE, AT ONE POINT.
BUT SOME PEOPLE CAN COME AWAY FROM A CAR WRECK WITHOUT HARM, REGARDLESS OF HOW MANGLED THE VEHICLE IS.
SUCH WAS THE CASE WITH YOU.
YOU ALMOST WALKED AWAY FROM THE DARKER ASPECTS OF YOUR LIFE WITHOUT A SCRATCH. BUT THE CHILD I SPEAK OF... IT HAS A WAY OF AFFECTING PEOPLE.
ITS EVIL CORRUPTS THE LIVES OF THOSE IT TOUCHES. IT FINDS A PERSON'S WEAKNESSES -- PAST OR PRESENT --
-- AND DRAWS FROM IT CONSEQUENCES THAT NEVER PREVIOUSLY MANIFESTED THEMSELVES.
NO... NO, THAT'S RIDICULOUS! I WAS A JUNKIE! A JUNKIE WHO...
... WAS WITH ... A LOT OF PEOPLE.
SO YOU'VE SAID. BUT THEN ASK YOURSELF -- WHY ONLY NOW HAS THE INFECTION SURFACED?
IT... IT CAN TAKE A LONG TIME FOR H.I.V. TO SHOW UP IN YOUR BLOOD-STREAM...
A LONG TIME, YES...
BUT NOT THE YEARS IT'S TAKEN TO SHOW UP IN YOURS.


YOU'VE TESTED YOURSELF HOW OFTEN?
EVERY SIX MONTHS SINCE... SINCE THAT TIME...
AND STOPPED FRETTING ABOUT THE RESULTS YEARS AGO.
FOR AN INSURANCE POLICY AT MY NEW JOB...
BECAUSE YOU FELT YOU WERE SAFE. THE DOCTORS EVEN TOLD YOU AS MUCH -- LONG AGO. AND THIS TEST WAS JUST A FORMALITY AS WELL, WASN'T IT?
AND THE SAME DAY THAT THIS CHILD COMES INTO MISTER MURDOCK'S CARE, YOUR BIOLOGICAL MAKEUP SUDDENLY DECIDES THAT --
-- YEARS BEYOND THE CRITICAL PERIOD IN WHICH ANY POSSIBLE INFECTION WOULD'VE TAKEN ITS TOLL -- ITS IMMUNE SYSTEM HAS BEEN COMPROMISED?
BUT WHAT YOU'RE SAYING MAKES NO SENSE...
MANY THINGS IN LIFE DEFY CONVENTIONAL DEFINITION, YOUNG LADY. BUT THAT DOESN'T NEGATE THEIR EXISTENCE.
SOMETHING HAS HAPPENED TO YOU, KAREN PAGE -- AND IT WAS NO ACCIDENT. YOU'RE A CASUALTY IN THE WAKE OF EVIL MACHINATIONS YOUR SPECIES IS EONS SHY OF EVEN COMPREHENDING.
END THE CHILD, AND YOU END THAT EVIL -- AND REPAIR THE DAMAGE IT'S FORCED UPON THIS WORLD...
... AND YOUR LIFE.
I CAN'T KILL A CHILD! I DON'T CARE WHAT YOU SAY IT IS -- I CAN'T END A LIFE TO SAVE MY OWN!


PERHAPS NOT. PERHAPS YOU ARE THAT IGNORANTLY VALIANT.
BUT WHAT ABOUT THE LIVES OF OTHERS? WHAT ABOUT THE LIVES OF *INNOCENT* PEOPLE YOU'LL NEVER MEET... OR THE ONES YOU *ALREADY* KNOW AND LOVE.
EVERLAST
LOVE?
WHAT ARE YOU SAYING?
EVIL SPREADS LIKE A VIRUS. AND WE ALL KNOW HOW VIRUSES SPREAD -- FROM ONE PERSON TO ANOTHER.
FROM CONTACT.
FROM CLOSE, ***INTIMATE*** CONTACT.
OH, GOD...
OH, GOD, PLEASE NO...
MATT...


READY FOR THE CLICHE?
"IS THIS HEAVEN?"
I CAN'T PICK UP ANY SOUNDS BEYOND THE RUSTLE OF THE COSTUME, MY THROBBING HEAD, AND MY OWN HEARTBEAT.
WHICH MEANS I'M STILL ALIVE.
LUCKY DEVIL.
I'M IN A MAN-MADE VACUUM. SOMEONE WENT OUT OF THEIR WAY TO INSURE I CAN'T HEAR BEYOND THE WALLS OF THIS ROOM.
BUT IT IS A ROOM...
WHICH MEANS THERE'S A WAY OUT.
THE ALLEYWAY WAS A SET-UP. BUT WHO? CAN'T BE ANY OF THE USUAL SUSPECTS; WHY GO THROUGH ALL THE TROUBLE WITHOUT KILLING ME?
SOMEONE WANTS ME ALIVE...
AND TO STAY PUT.
IT'S GOING TO BE MY PLEASURE TO DISAPPOINT THEM.



GOOD GOD! THAT SHRIEKING NOISE..! IT'S... DEAFENING..!
CACOPHONOUS BEYOND COMPREHENSION...
THE PAIN...
I CAN BARELY MAKE OUT THE TUMBLERS SHIFTING AS THE DOORKNOB TURNS...
I'M NOT ALONE.



DO YOU KNOW WHAT THAT SOUND IS, MISTER MURDOCK? THE ONE THAT'S SO EFFECTIVELY RENDERING YOUR HEIGHTENED SENSES AND EQUILIBRIUM USELESS?
IT'S AN ANGELIC SHRIEK.
IT'S THE CRY OF THE FALLEN -- THE SOUND AN ETHEREAL BEING UTTERS WHEN CAST OUT OF GOD'S PRESENCE.
SICKENING, ISN'T IT? FORTUNATELY, THE FREQUENCY IS SO HIGH, IT DOESN'T AFFECT ME. BUT I'M TOLD IT'S AGONIZING FOR DOGS.
AND FOR YOU, APPARENTLY.
P...P... PLEASE... SSS... SSS... STOP... I... IT...
I'M AFRAID IT'S QUITE NECESSARY TO KEEP YOU AT BAY.
WH... WHO... ARE... YOU..?
WHO I AM IS OF LITTLE IMPORTANCE. BUT SINCE YOU ASK, YOU MAY CALL ME BAAL. IT'S AN UNFORTUNATE NAME, I KNOW.
WHAT... D... DO YOU... W... WANT... W... WI...
WHAT DO I WANT WITH YOU? YES -- WELL, IT'S SIMPLE REALLY.
MISTER MURDOCK, I'VE BEEN ON THIS MAN'S EARTH FOR FIFTY-THREE YEARS. MY SOLE PURPOSE HAS BEEN TO PREPARE FOR THE COMING OF SOMEONE SO IMPORTANT, I DARE NOT UTTER THE NAME, AS I'M NOT TRULY WORTHY.


THE SOUND IS UNEARTHLY...
AND OTHER'S LIKE ME HAVE BEEN BLESSED WITH THE HONOR OF RAISING THE FUTURE OF THIS AND EVERY OTHER WORLD --
-- OF PROTECTING IT FROM ANY HARM THAT MAY COME ITS WAY IN THIS, ITS MOST VULNERABLE TIME.
TRYING TO FOCUS ON THE SOURCE... BUT MY SENSES ARE IN COMPLETE DISARRAY...
AND AS YOU MIGHT IMAGINE -- YOU BEING IN THE HERO BUSINESS AND ALL -- THERE ARE FORCES THAT OPPOSE ME AND MINE...
... THOSE WHO WOULD SEEK TO CORRUPT AND COMPROMISE ALL WE ENDEAVOR -- PARTICULARLY WHEN IT COMES TO OUR PRIMARY OBJECTIVE.
WAIT... I THINK IT'S... YES!... IT'S COMING FROM...
THERE!... A SPEAKER... GOTTA GET A BEAD ON ITS EXACT ANGLE.
FOR ALL I KNOW, IT'S RIGHT BESIDE ME... OR THREE TOWNS AWAY... I'M HELPLESS... UNLESS...
WE KNOW THEY'VE ATTEMPTED TO RECRUIT YOU TO THEIR CAUSE, AND WE DON'T INTEND TO HOLD YOUR MOMENTARY LAPSE OF REASON AGAINST YOU.
YOU'VE BEEN MISINFORMED, MISTER MURDOCK -- IT'S NOT YOUR FAULT YOU CAN'T SEE THAT. YOU ARE, AFTER ALL, BLIND.


THERE!... A GAP IN THE SOUND!...
IT'S A LOOP... IT HAS A BEGINNING...
IT ALSO HAS AN END.
THERE'S A NANOSECOND PAUSE BEFORE THE LOOP STARTS ANEW...
HAVE TO CONCENTRATE... CLEAR MY HEAD... PHASE OUT CHATTY KATHY HERE...
FIND THE PATTERN... COUNT THE SECONDS TO THE BREAK... WAIT FOR IT...
I APOLOGIZE FOR DETAINING YOU, AND WOULD VERY MUCH LIKE TO END YOUR DISCOMFORT AND SEND YOU ON YOUR WAY.
BUT BEFORE ANY OF THAT CAN HAPPEN, I NEED TO KNOW ONE THING...
IT'S COMING... HOLD ON, MURDOCK... SHUT HIM OUT...
THE CHILD, MISTER MURDOCK -- THE VERY IMPORTANT CHILD...
IT'S COMING... KEEP HEAD CLEAR... HOLD ON...
WHERE IS THE CHILD?
HOLD ON...


NOW!
THOK
FAPP
Uh-Oh...
TIRED OF THIS...
SEEPING INTO EVERY CORNER OF MY LIFE...
INSANITY...
IT...
... ENDS ...
... HERE!
SMAK
OFF THE BOSS, RED!
THIS IS FOR JUMPING ON MY NECK!
SUBDUE HIM.

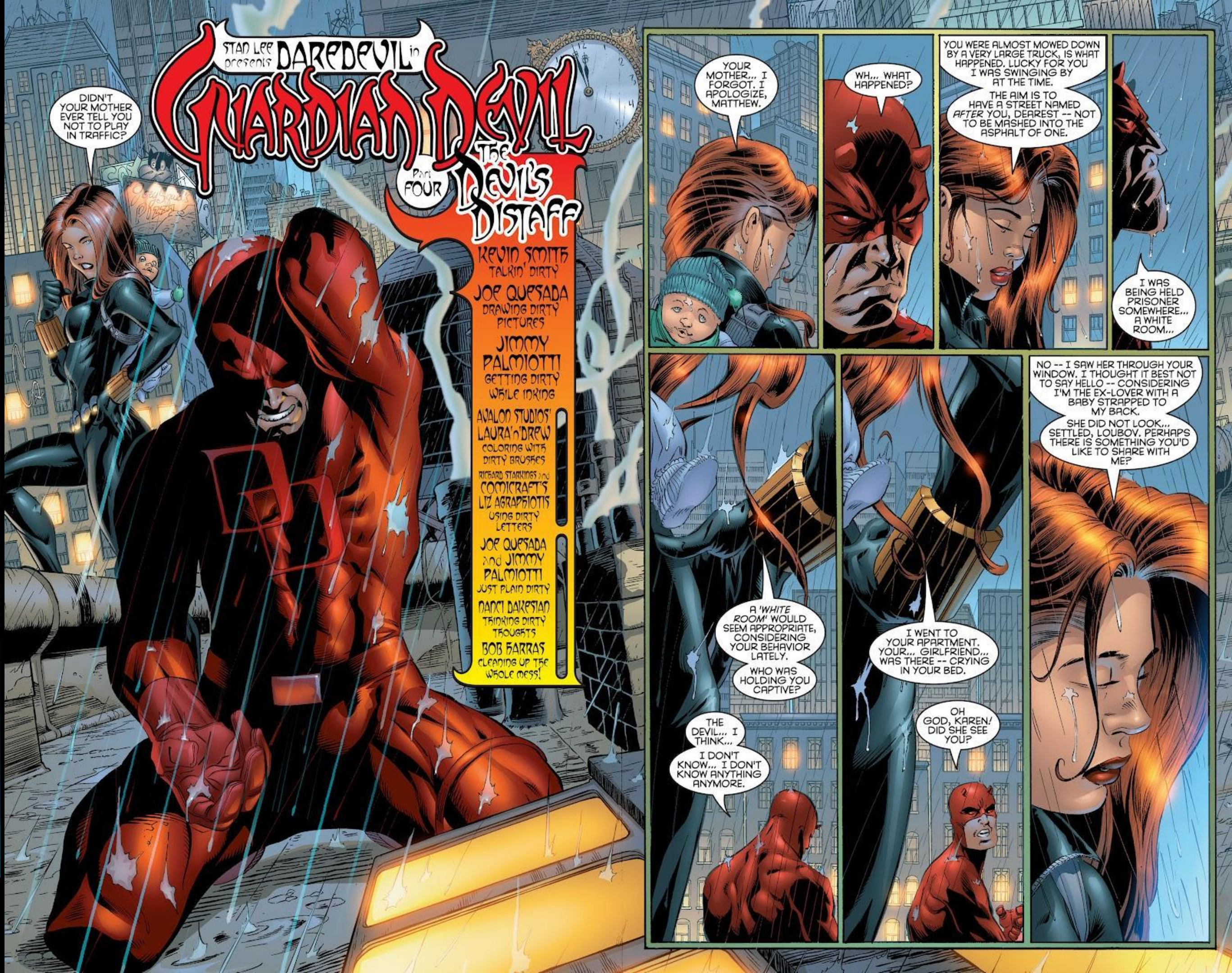

SMAK
SPAK
AMATEURS...
BUT STRONG AMATEURS...
DON'T SHOOT!
WE CAN'T RISK HARMING HIM!
FWAMMMM
MADE YA LOOK!
BEWARE THE PANTHER



STILL DISORIENTED...
THE GANG-UP DIDN'T MAKE IT ANY BETTER...
SENSES SCREWED UP...
CAN'T 'SEE'...
WHO YOU KIDDING, MURDOCK? YOU HAVEN'T 'SEEN' IN YEARS...
HONK HONK
SCREEEEEE
NOT SINCE...
...YOU SAVED THAT OLD MAN FROM THAT...
HONK
...WHAT WAS IT AGAIN?...
OH YEAH...
A TRUCK...

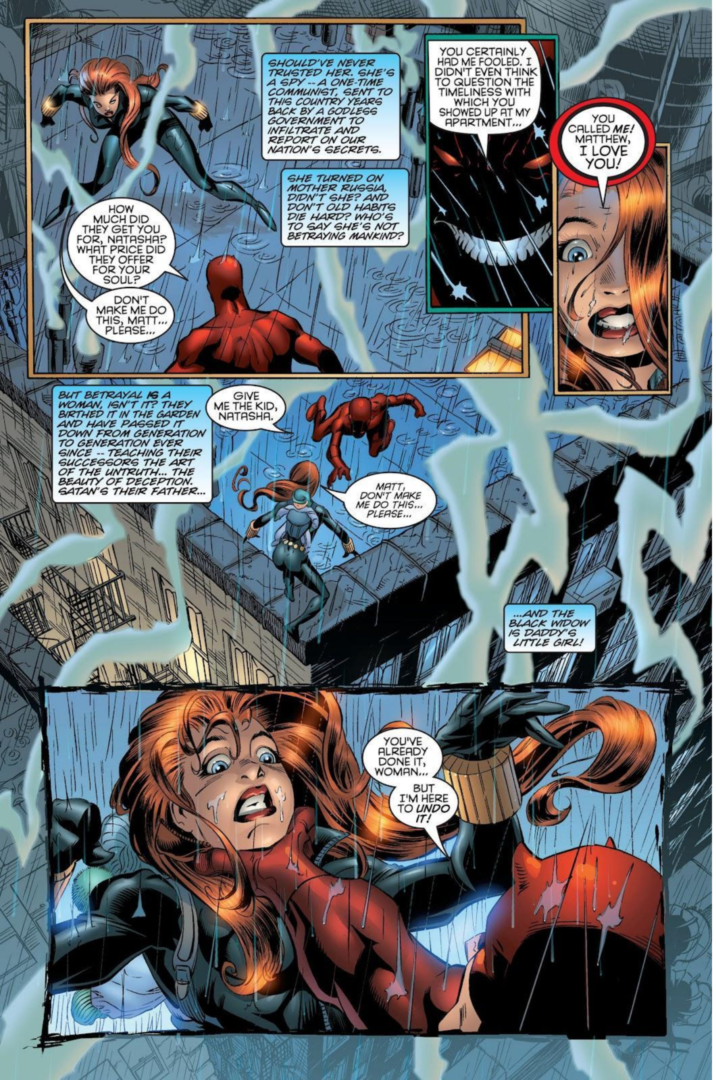

MARVEL
KNIGHTS
MAR
#4
HERE COMES...
DAREDEVIL
THE MAN WITHOUT FEAR!
PALMIOTTI


SINCE COMING-TO IN THE HOSPITAL AFTER THE ACCIDENT THAT TOOK HIS SIGHT, THE ONE CONSTANT COMPANION IN MATT MURDOCK'S LIFE HAS BEEN THE NEVERENDING DIN OF PULSES THAT SURROUND HIM.
AS THE SIGHTED CANNOT ESCAPE THE VISUAL BARRAGE OF THE WAKING WORLD, SO IT IS THAT -- THANKS TO THE DUBIOUS GIFT OF HIS HEIGHTENED SENSES WHICH WERE THE RESULT OF SAID ACCIDENT --
MATT MURDOCK (AKA DAREDEVIL) IS FOREVER INUNDATED BY THE BIO-RHYTHMS OF BLOOD RACING THROUGH BEATING HEARTS AND COURSING THROUGH EVEN THE SMALLEST OF VEINS.
WHAT THE SIGHTED FAIL TO REALIZE IS THAT EVERY HEARTBEAT IS A SIGNATURE -- A FINGERPRINT THAT CAN BE USED TO IDENTIFY ONE INDIVIDUAL IN A SEA OF MILLIONS.
MATT MURDOCK HAS JUST IDENTIFIED TWO OF THOSE HEARTBEATS.
ONE HE'S HEARD RACE AND CALM COUNTLESS TIMES -- BOTH IN THE COURSE OF BATTLE AND IN THE HEAT OF PASSION.
IT'S OFTEN REPRESENTED HIS OWN PRIVATE HEAVEN.
THE OTHER HAS BEEN THE HARBINGER OF THE DURESS HIS LIFE HAS UNDERGONE IN THE PAST FEW DAYS.
IT'S COME TO REPRESENT HIS OWN PRIVATE HELL.
MY LOVE...


DIDN'T YOUR MOTHER EVER TELL YOU NOT TO PLAY IN TRAFFIC?
STAN LEE presents DAREDEVIL in
GUARDIAN DEVIL
Part FOUR
THE DEVIL'S DISTAFF
KEVIN SMITH TALKIN' DIRTY
JOE QUESADA DRAWING DIRTY PICTURES
JIMMY PALMIOTTI GETTING DIRTY WHILE INKING
AVALON STUDIOS' LAURA'n'DREW COLORING WITH DIRTY BRUSHES
RICHARD STARKINGS and COMICRAFT'S LIZ AGRAPHIOTIS USING DIRTY LETTERS
JOE QUESADA and JIMMY PALMIOTTI JUST PLAIN DIRTY
NANCI DAKESIAN THINKING DIRTY THOUGHTS
BOB HARRAS CLEANING UP THE WHOLE MESS!
YOUR MOTHER... I FORGOT. I APOLOGIZE, MATTHEW.
WH... WHAT HAPPENED?
YOU WERE ALMOST MOWED DOWN BY A VERY LARGE TRUCK, IS WHAT HAPPENED. LUCKY FOR YOU I WAS SWINGING BY AT THE TIME.
THE AIM IS TO HAVE A STREET NAMED AFTER YOU, DEAREST -- NOT TO BE MASHED INTO THE ASPHALT OF ONE.
I WAS BEING HELD PRISONER SOMEWHERE... A WHITE ROOM...
A 'WHITE ROOM' WOULD SEEM APPROPRIATE, CONSIDERING YOUR BEHAVIOR LATELY.
WHO WAS HOLDING YOU CAPTIVE?
THE DEVIL... I THINK...
I DON'T KNOW... I DON'T KNOW ANYTHING ANYMORE.
I WENT TO YOUR APARTMENT. YOUR... GIRLFRIEND... WAS THERE -- CRYING IN YOUR BED.
OH GOD, KAREN! DID SHE SEE YOU?
NO -- I SAW HER THROUGH YOUR WINDOW. I THOUGHT IT BEST NOT TO SAY HELLO -- CONSIDERING I'M THE EX-LOVER WITH A BABY STRAPPED TO MY BACK.
SHE DID NOT LOOK... SETTLED, LOUBOV. PERHAPS THERE IS SOMETHING YOU'D LIKE TO SHARE WITH ME?


WHERE WOULD I START? BETWEEN HER AND FOGGY...
FRANKLIN, YES. HE'S ALL OVER THE NEWS... AS WAS YOUR RESIGNATION FROM THE FIRM. THE MEDIA HAS TAKEN IT AS A SIGN OF HIS GUILT.
MY LOVE -- WHAT HAS HAPPENED TO YOUR LIFE?
MY LIFE... I'M HAVING THE WORSE FIT OF DEJA VU. HORRIBLE MEMORIES... OF FISK. AND HOW HE DESTROYED MY LIFE ONCE... PIECE BY PIECE.
DO YOU HAVE ENEMIES -- BEYOND THE COSTUMED VARIETY? THOSE WHO MIGHT SEEK TO DESTROY THE MAN BEHIND THE MASK?
THE ONLY ENEMY IT WOULD SEEM THAT IS BEHIND THIS, IS RIDING SHOTGUN ON YOUR BACK.
MATTHEW, PLEASE! I KNOW YOU'VE BEEN THROUGH A GREAT DEAL --
-- BUT FOCUSING YOUR CONFUSION AND RAGE ON THE CHILD AS YOU HAVE IS BEYOND FORGIVENESS!
SHE'S RIGHT.
OR IS SHE?
MY JUDGMENT -- IT'S BEEN CLOUDED BEFORE. BY LOVE. OR LUST. THE TYPHOID MARY AFFAIR LEAPS TO MIND. KAREN'S BETRAYAL TOO.

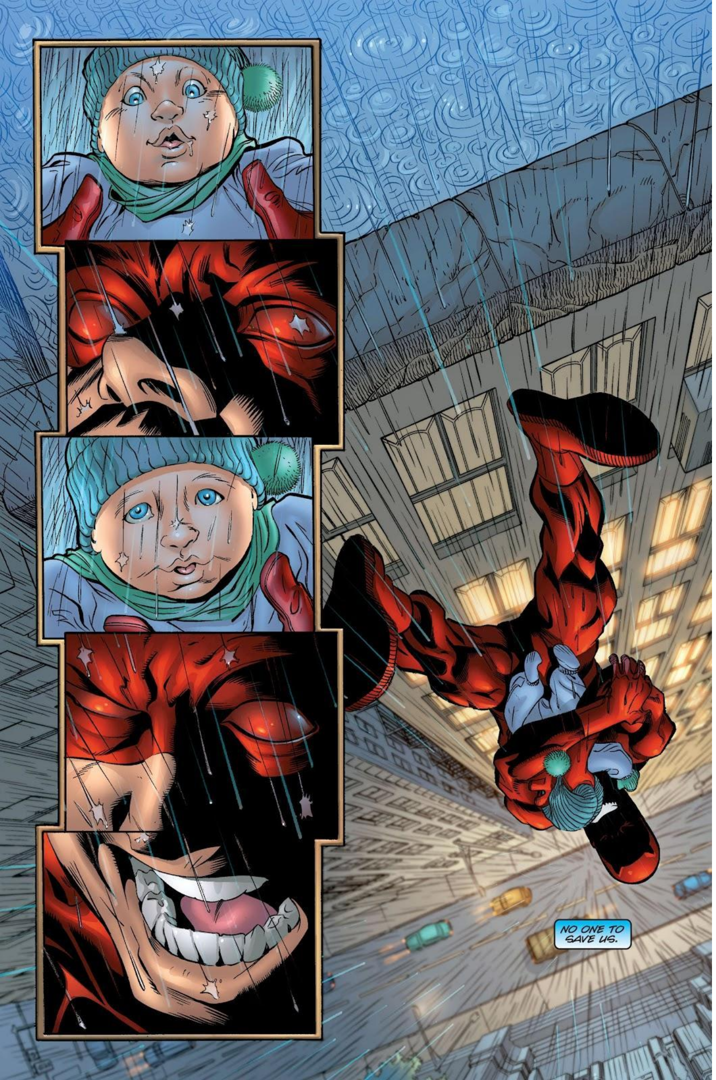

MATTHEW? MATTHEW, ARE YOU LISTENING TO ME?
THEY'VE ALWAYS BEEN MY DOWNFALL. IT'S THE CURSE OF THE MURDOCK MEN -- WE HANG OUR HEARTS ON THE WRONG WOMEN. OFTEN WITH POOR RESULTS.
ALWAYS WITH POOR RESULTS.
HOW HAVE YOU BEEN, NATASHA? NOTHING... UNFORTUNATE... GOING ON IN YOUR LIFE?
WHAT DO YOU MEAN? NO -- NOTHING'S WRONG WITH ME. MATT, YOU'RE HURT, LET ME GET YOU TO...
AND NATASHA -- WHAT MAKES HER ANY DIFFERENT THAN THE REST? SHE'S NEVER PROVEN VERY FAITHFUL. HOW MANY TIMES HAS SHE THROWN HERSELF AT TONY STARK? "LIBERAL", SOME OF THE AVENGERS HAVE CALLED HER.
I'D BET THEY'VE CALLED HER WORSE BEHIND HER BACK.
TO WHERE, NATASHA? SOMEWHERE I CAN GET HELP, PERHAPS?
YES -- YES, WE SHOULD GET YOU SOME HELP. YOU'RE NOT WELL...
NO -- NO, I'M NOT. HAVEN'T BEEN... NOT FOR A FEW DAYS, NOW.
WHY AM I TRUSTING HER IN THE FIRST PLACE? THE CHILD'S BEEN IN HER CARE FOR THE LAST DAY, AND NOTHING BAD'S BEFALLEN HER. PERHAPS SHE'S BEEN LUCKY...
OR IN ON IT.
I THINK YOU SHOULD STAY BACK, MATTHEW. YOU'RE MAKING ME NERVOUS, AND YOU SHOULD STAY AWAY FROM US.
THERE! IN DEFENSE OF HER TWISTED PARCEL. SHE'S READY TO ATTACK ME TO PROTECT IT -- TO PROTECT THE EVIL SHE CARRIES.



SHOULD'VE NEVER TRUSTED HER. SHE'S A SPY -- A ONE-TIME COMMUNIST, SENT TO THIS COUNTRY YEARS BACK BY A GODLESS GOVERNMENT TO INFILTRATE AND REPORT ON OUR NATION'S SECRETS.
HOW MUCH DID THEY GET YOU FOR, NATASHA? WHAT PRICE DID THEY OFFER FOR YOUR SOUL?
DON'T MAKE ME DO THIS, MATT... PLEASE...
SHE TURNED ON MOTHER RUSSIA, DIDN'T SHE? AND DON'T OLD HABITS DIE HARD? WHO'S TO SAY SHE'S NOT BETRAYING MANKIND?
YOU CERTAINLY HAD ME FOOLED. I DIDN'T EVEN THINK TO QUESTION THE TIMELINESS WITH WHICH YOU SHOWED UP AT MY APARTMENT...
YOU CALLED ME! MATTHEW, I LOVE YOU!
BUT BETRAYAL IS A WOMAN, ISN'T IT? THEY BIRTHED IT IN THE GARDEN AND HAVE PASSED IT DOWN FROM GENERATION TO GENERATION EVER SINCE -- TEACHING THEIR SUCCESSORS THE ART OF THE UNTRUTH... THE BEAUTY OF DECEPTION. SATAN'S THEIR FATHER...
GIVE ME THE KID, NATASHA.
MATT, DON'T MAKE ME DO THIS... PLEASE...
...AND THE BLACK WIDOW IS DADDY'S LITTLE GIRL!
YOU'VE ALREADY DONE IT, WOMAN...
BUT I'M HERE TO UNDO IT!



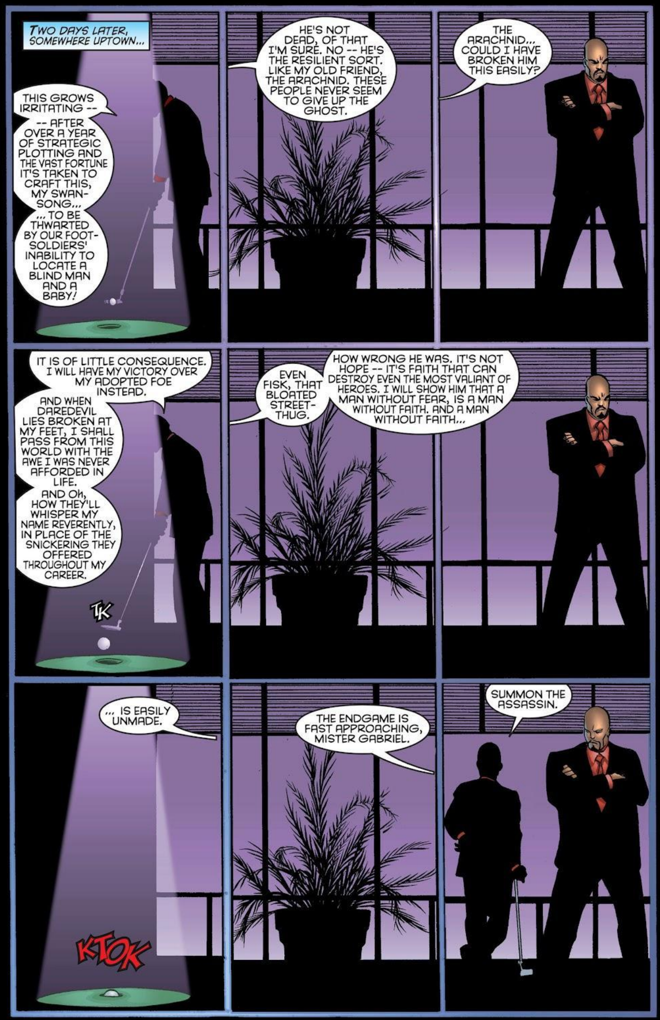
I LOOK BACK ON MY LIFE AND IT'S LITTERED WITH THE LIES WOMEN HAVE TOLD ME. LIES THAT HAVE BLACKENED MY SOUL.
WELL, IT'S TIME TO DELIVER A LESSON IN TRUTH.
AND TRUTH...
WELL, TRUTH IS PAIN.
AAUGGHH!
SO MUCH, SO WRONG, IN SUCH A SHORT TIME... AND IT ALL COMES BACK TO YOU.
IT CAN END AS QUICKLY AS IT'S STARTED. I CAN MAKE IT ALL RIGHT AGAIN.
NO ONE TO SAVE YOU THIS TIME, LITTLE BEAST.
LOOK AT HER -- ALREADY UNCONSCIOUS. SUCH A MINIMAL PAIN THRESHOLD. NO WONDER SHE COULDN'T LEAD THE AVENGERS.

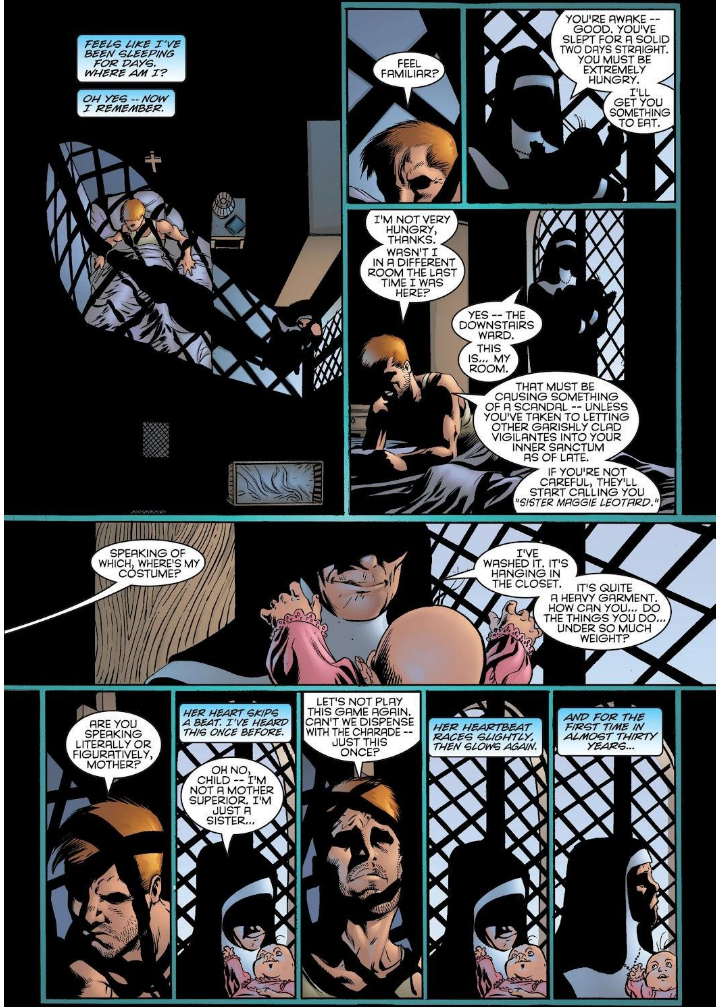

NO ONE TO SAVE US.

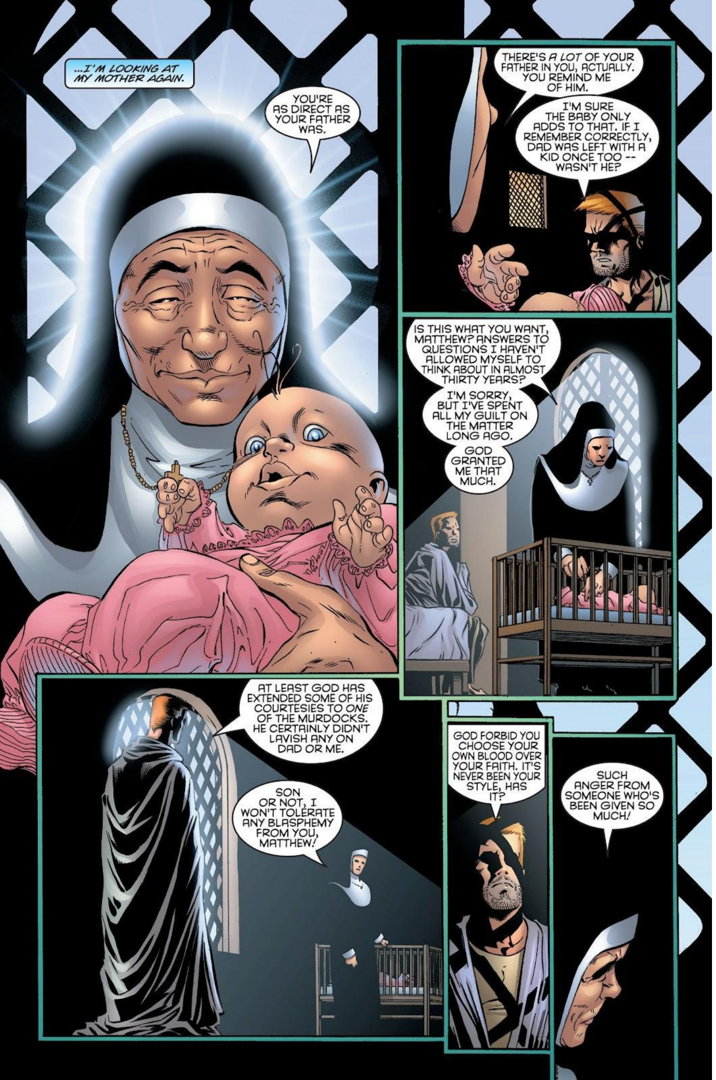

CAN'T THINK STRAIGHT...
EVERYTHING'S A BLUR...
NOTHING MAKES SENSE...
CAN'T SEE WHAT'S RIGHT...
WHAT'S WRONG...
FALLING FAST...
FATHER...
FORGIVE ME...
NO...
NOT FATHER.
FLIP
CLK
WHIZZZ
CHKK
TOO CLOSE. ANGLE'S WRONG. NO GOOD. BRACE FOR IMPACT. SHIELD THE KID.
LUCKY, DEVIL -- **SOMEONE'S** ON YOUR SIDE.


NOTHING VITAL DAMAGED. HIP TOOK MOST OF THE BLOW, BUT THAT SAME RIB WENT AGAIN. FEEL LIKE DEATH... BUT STILL ALIVE.
THE BABY'S IN ONE PIECE, TOO. KID SEEMS TO BE ENJOYING ALL THIS. MAKES ME YEARN FOR THE CAREFREE DAYS OF MY OWN CHILDHOOD... BEFORE THE ISOTOPE.
THE PAIN SHOOTS DOWN MY SIDE -- REMINDING ME THAT CHILDHOOD WAS A LONG TIME AGO. TAKES LONGER TO HEAL NOW, OLD MAN.
HURTS LIKE THE DEVIL. CAN'T STOP, THOUGH -- GOTTA FIND THE ONE PERSON WHO MIGHT GIVE ME SOME PERSPECTIVE ON ALL THIS... WHO MIGHT HELP ME GET CLEAR.
PLEASE, GOD... LET HER STILL BE HERE... LOSING IT... NATASHA... I'M SORRY...
REUNIONS... WHY DO WE ALWAYS WAIT... FOR THE WORST TIMES... KAREN...
AND SUDDENLY, IT'S NOT SO DARK ANYMORE... FOR THE FIRST TIME IN FORTY-EIGHT HOURS, I FEEL THE GROUND BENEATH ME... BUT IT'S CALLING ME...
MOTHER...


HELP ME...


TWO DAYS LATER, SOMEWHERE UPTOWN...
THIS GROWS IRRITATING --
-- AFTER OVER A YEAR OF STRATEGIC PLOTTING AND THE VAST FORTUNE IT'S TAKEN TO CRAFT THIS, MY SWAN-SONG...
...TO BE THWARTED BY OUR FOOT-SOLDIERS' INABILITY TO LOCATE A BLIND MAN AND A BABY!
HE'S NOT DEAD, OF THAT I'M SURE. NO -- HE'S THE RESILIENT SORT. LIKE MY OLD FRIEND, THE ARACHNID. THESE PEOPLE NEVER SEEM TO GIVE UP THE GHOST.
THE ARACHNID... COULD I HAVE BROKEN HIM THIS EASILY?
IT IS OF LITTLE CONSEQUENCE. I WILL HAVE MY VICTORY OVER MY ADOPTED FOE INSTEAD.
AND WHEN DAREDEVIL LIES BROKEN AT MY FEET, I SHALL PASS FROM THIS WORLD WITH THE AWE I WAS NEVER AFFORDED IN LIFE.
AND OH, HOW THEY'LL WHISPER MY NAME REVERENTLY, IN PLACE OF THE SNICKERING THEY OFFERED THROUGHOUT MY CAREER.
TK
EVEN FISK, THAT BLOATED STREET-THUG.
HOW WRONG HE WAS. IT'S NOT HOPE -- IT'S FAITH THAT CAN DESTROY EVEN THE MOST VALIANT OF HEROES. I WILL SHOW HIM THAT A MAN WITHOUT FEAR, IS A MAN WITHOUT FAITH. AND A MAN WITHOUT FAITH...
...IS EASILY UNMADE.
KTOK
THE ENDGAME IS FAST APPROACHING, MISTER GABRIEL.
SUMMON THE ASSASSIN.


FEELS LIKE I'VE BEEN SLEEPING FOR DAYS. WHERE AM I?
OH YES -- NOW I REMEMBER.
FEEL FAMILIAR?
YOU'RE AWAKE -- GOOD. YOU'VE SLEPT FOR A SOLID TWO DAYS STRAIGHT. YOU MUST BE EXTREMELY HUNGRY.
I'LL GET YOU SOMETHING TO EAT.
I'M NOT VERY HUNGRY, THANKS.
WASN'T I IN A DIFFERENT ROOM THE LAST TIME I WAS HERE?
YES -- THE DOWNSTAIRS WARD.
THIS IS... MY ROOM.
THAT MUST BE CAUSING SOMETHING OF A SCANDAL -- UNLESS YOU'VE TAKEN TO LETTING OTHER GARISHLY CLAD VIGILANTES INTO YOUR INNER SANCTUM AS OF LATE.
IF YOU'RE NOT CAREFUL, THEY'LL START CALLING YOU "SISTER MAGGIE LEOTARD."
SPEAKING OF WHICH, WHERE'S MY COSTUME?
I'VE WASHED IT. IT'S HANGING IN THE CLOSET.
IT'S QUITE A HEAVY GARMENT. HOW CAN YOU... DO THE THINGS YOU DO... UNDER SO MUCH WEIGHT?
ARE YOU SPEAKING LITERALLY OR FIGURATIVELY, MOTHER?
HER HEART SKIPS A BEAT. I'VE HEARD THIS ONCE BEFORE.
OH NO, CHILD -- I'M NOT A MOTHER SUPERIOR. I'M JUST A SISTER...
LET'S NOT PLAY THIS GAME AGAIN. CAN'T WE DISPENSE WITH THE CHARADE -- JUST THIS ONCE?
HER HEARTBEAT RACES SLIGHTLY, THEN SLOWS AGAIN.
AND FOR THE FIRST TIME IN ALMOST THIRTY YEARS...


...I'M LOOKING AT MY MOTHER AGAIN.
YOU'RE AS DIRECT AS YOUR FATHER WAS.
THERE'S A LOT OF YOUR FATHER IN YOU, ACTUALLY. YOU REMIND ME OF HIM.
I'M SURE THE BABY ONLY ADDS TO THAT. IF I REMEMBER CORRECTLY, DAD WAS LEFT WITH A KID ONCE TOO -- WASN'T HE?
IS THIS WHAT YOU WANT, MATTHEW? ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS I HAVEN'T ALLOWED MYSELF TO THINK ABOUT IN ALMOST THIRTY YEARS?
I'M SORRY, BUT I'VE SPENT ALL MY GUILT ON THE MATTER LONG AGO.
GOD GRANTED ME THAT MUCH.
AT LEAST GOD HAS EXTENDED SOME OF HIS COURTESIES TO ONE OF THE MURDOCKS. HE CERTAINLY DIDN'T LAVISH ANY ON DAD OR ME.
SON OR NOT, I WON'T TOLERATE ANY BLASPHEMY FROM YOU, MATTHEW!
GOD FORBID YOU CHOOSE YOUR OWN BLOOD OVER YOUR FAITH. IT'S NEVER BEEN YOUR STYLE, HAS IT?
SUCH ANGER FROM SOMEONE WHO'S BEEN GIVEN SO MUCH!

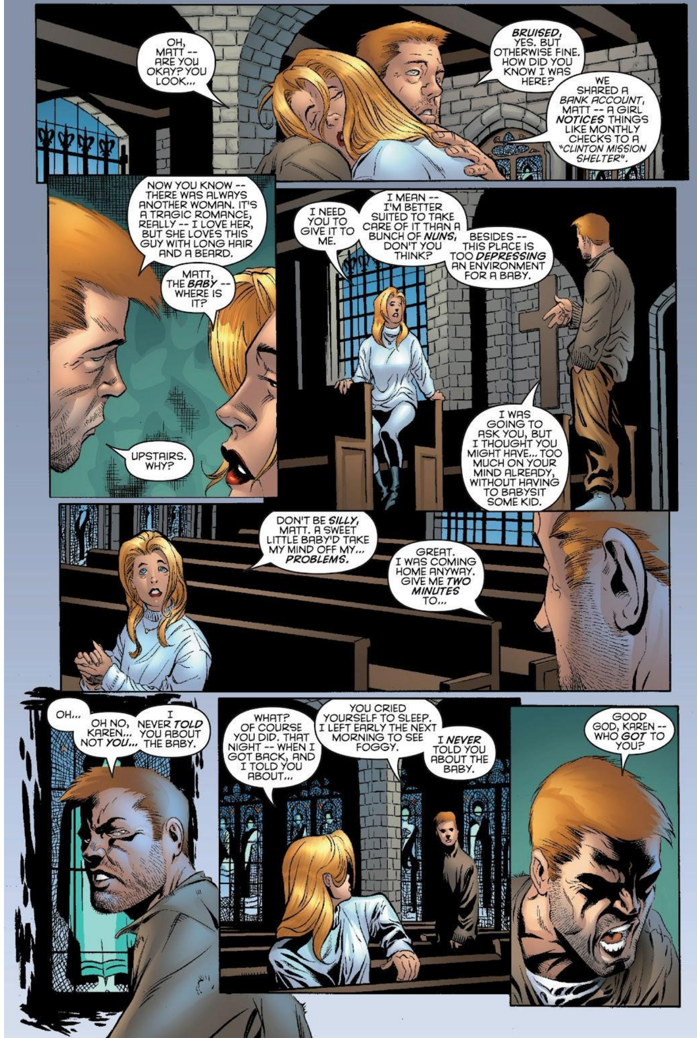

DARKNESS, MOTHER! THAT'S WHAT I'VE BEEN GIVEN -- A LIFE OF DARKNESS!
SEEING DARKNESS, FIGHTING DARKNESS, FEELING DARKNESS!
YOU'LL HAVE TO EXCUSE ME IF I CAN'T FIND THE SAME FAITH IN THE SO-CALLED ALMIGHTY THAT YOU'VE FOUND! BUT THEN, I GUESS IT'S EASY FOR YOU TO JUMP TO HIS DEFENSE!
AFTER ALL -- HE LET YOU OFF THE HOOK PRETTY EASILY, DIDN'T HE!
SLAP
Oh GOD...
Oh GOD, I'M SORRY...


SHE GIVES ME SOME CLOTHES THAT'VE BEEN DONATED TO THE MISSION AND MAKES ME SOME TEA.
IT ALMOST MAKES ME CRY.
I TALK FOR HOURS. UNFORTUNATELY, IT'S ABOUT NONE OF THE THINGS I'VE ALWAYS WANTED TO ASK HER -- IT'S ALL ABOUT THE CHILD AND THE EVENTS OF THE PAST WEEK.
I TELL HER I'M NOT SURE WHO TO BELIEVE ANYMORE -- WHO TO TRUST.
FINALLY, SHE SAYS...
DID YOU ASK GOD?
MA -- MAYBE IN YOUR WORLD, THAT'S AN OPTION. HOWEVER, IN THE REAL WORLD...
DON'T BE GLIB, MATTHEW.
SORRY, MA'AM.
I KNOW YOUR FATHER RAISED YOU IN THE FAITH.
I ALSO KNOW AFTER READING ABOUT YOUR TWO LIVES OVER THE YEARS THAT YOU WORK ON THE SIDE OF THE JUST.
YOU'RE AN ANGEL, MATTHEW -- NOT ONE OF THE HEAVENLY HOST, GRANTED, BUT A SERVANT OF GOD NONETHELESS. AS SUCH, PLACING YOUR TRUST IN HIM SHOULDN'T TAKE THAT GREAT A LEAP OF FAITH.
ASK GOD WHAT TO BELIEVE.
I... I CAN'T.
MOM -- I'M NOT SURE GOD EXISTS ANYMORE.
MATTHEW -- YOU'RE TOO MATURE TO GET MIRED IN THAT OLD CHESTNUT. AFTER ALL THE THINGS YOU'VE DONE, AND ALL THE THINGS YOU'VE SEEN...
FIGURATIVELY...
HOW CAN YOU EVEN RAISE THAT QUESTION ANYMORE?
HOW CAN YOU NOT?
LOOK BACK AT YOUR LIFE, MOM -- LOOK AT ALL YOUR LOSS. LOOK AT THE PEOPLE YOU MINISTER TO -- THE BROKEN, THE DESTITUTE.
GOOD PEOPLE, I'M SURE, WHO'VE FALLEN ON HARD TIMES, WHILE PEOPLE LIKE THE KINGPIN HAVE PROSPERED -- SOMETIMES OFF THE MISERY OF THE VERY PEOPLE YOU AID!

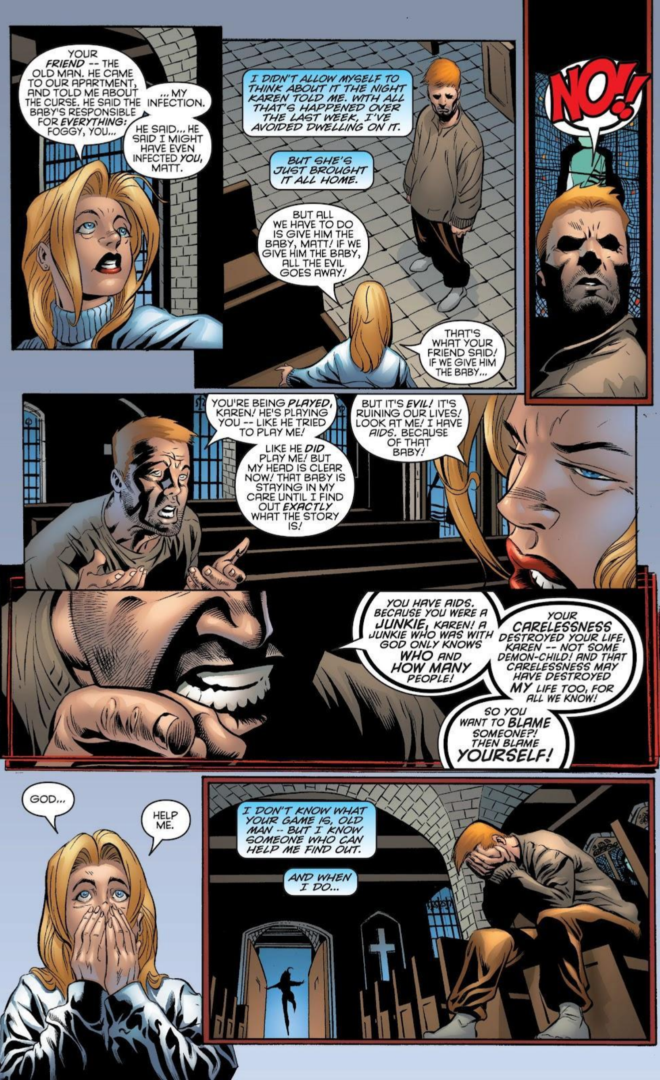

AFTER EVERYTHING WE'VE BOTH BEEN THROUGH, HOW CAN YOU SIT THERE AND DEFEND THE NOTION OF AN ALL-LOVING DEITY WHO'S PREPARING A PLACE IN HIS MAGIC KINGDOM FOR YOU, WHERE ALL THE WRONGS OF YOUR LIFE WILL BE MADE RIGHT?
IT'S A FAIRY TALE, ISN'T IT? A JOKE DEVISED A LONG TIME AGO TO KEEP THE DOWNTRODDEN FROM REVOLTING -- TO KEEP THEM COMPLIANT!
A JOKE THAT EVEN ALLOWED YOU TO ESCAPE THE GUILT OF ABANDONING YOUR OWN SON!
I EXPECT A VERBAL THRASHING; PERHAPS ANOTHER SLAP. INSTEAD, I HEAR MY MOTHER -- THE SAINTLY SISTER MAGGIE -- SMILE.
AND THAT SMILE...THAT SMILE COMES FROM SOMEPLACE I ONLY WISH I WAS MORE ACQUAINTED WITH. I FEEL HER CALM FILL THE ROOM, AND IT QUELLS MY SELF-INDUCED RAGE SOMEHOW. ALL I CAN THINK TO SAY IS...
HOW CAN YOU JUST... KNOW... LIKE YOU DO?
I WANT TO TELL YOU A STORY, MATTHEW. THAT'S SOMETHING I'M ALWAYS SORRY I MISSED WHEN I ENTERED THE CONVENT -- THE SIMPLE JOY OF TELLING MY CHILD STORIES.
THIS STORY IS ABOUT A KNIGHT AND A MONK.



THEY'RE TRAVELING TOGETHER SILENTLY FOR QUITE SOME TIME, UNTIL FINALLY THE KNIGHT SAYS --
"You live a life of poverty, never knowing the touch of a woman, denying yourself all manner of delights -- all because you believe there is a God. I do not share your faith, so I tear the marrow from the bones of Life, indulging myself at every opportunity. I've broken every law created by man and church, and I fear no consequence, because I don't believe in your God."
"MY QUESTION, HOWEVER, IS THIS --
"What if life ends in the ground, and man is nothing more than meat for worms. You will have wasted your entire life denying yourself for nothing. What if you die and learn there is no God?"
The monk thought about this and shrugged his shoulders, offering, "Then I suppose I will be sad. But tell me this, sir..."
"... WHAT HAPPENS WHEN YOU DIE...
"... AND YOU FIND OUT THERE IS?"
AND WITH A SIMPLE PARABLE, TOLD AT A MOTHER'S KNEE --
-- I'M A CHILD AGAIN.
THERE'S SOMEONE WHO'S BEEN WAITING TO SEE YOU. SHE'S DOWNSTAIRS. SHE CAME THIS MORNING BEFORE YOU WOKE UP. SHE SAYS SHE "HAD A FEELING" YOU'D BE HERE.
BUT I MUST TELL YOU, SON...
"-- SHE SEEMS VERY DISTRESSED."
KAREN?

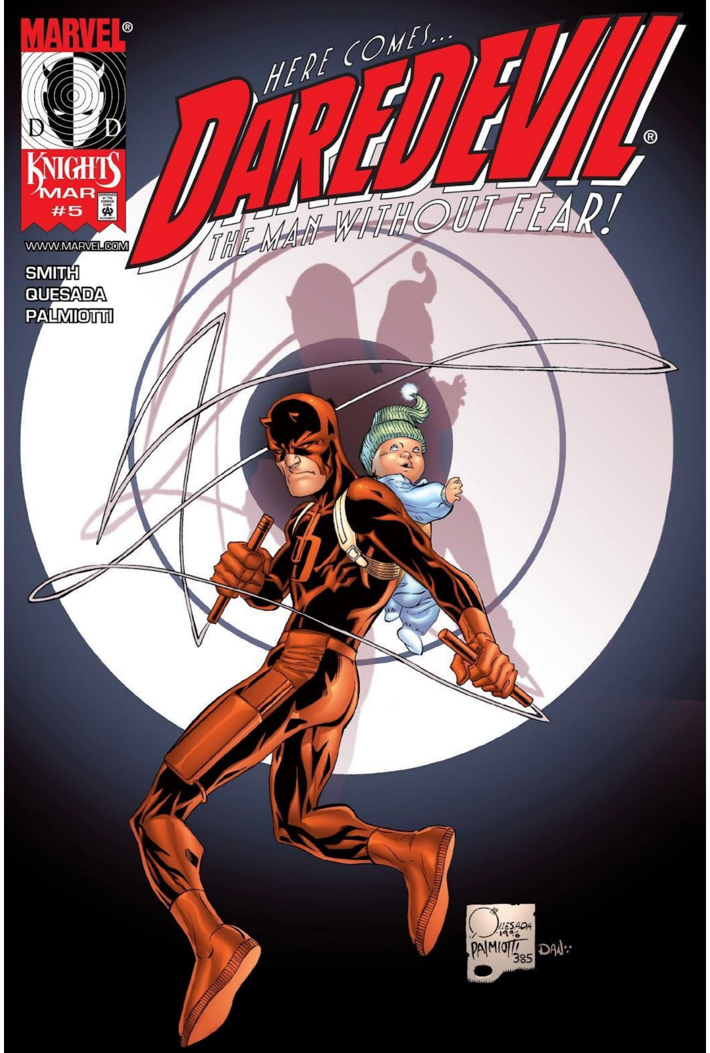


OH, MATT -- ARE YOU OKAY? YOU LOOK...
BRUISED, YES. BUT OTHERWISE FINE. HOW DID YOU KNOW I WAS HERE?
WE SHARED A BANK ACCOUNT, MATT -- A GIRL NOTICES THINGS LIKE MONTHLY CHECKS TO A "CLINTON MISSION SHELTER".
NOW YOU KNOW -- THERE WAS ALWAYS ANOTHER WOMAN. IT'S A TRAGIC ROMANCE, REALLY -- I LOVE HER, BUT SHE LOVES THIS GUY WITH LONG HAIR AND A BEARD.
MATT, THE BABY -- WHERE IS IT?
UPSTAIRS. WHY?
I NEED YOU TO GIVE IT TO ME.
I MEAN -- I'M BETTER SUITED TO TAKE CARE OF IT THAN A BUNCH OF NUNS, DON'T YOU THINK?
BESIDES -- THIS PLACE IS TOO DEPRESSING AN ENVIRONMENT FOR A BABY.
I WAS GOING TO ASK YOU, BUT I THOUGHT YOU MIGHT HAVE... TOO MUCH ON YOUR MIND ALREADY, WITHOUT HAVING TO BABYSIT SOME KID.
DON'T BE SILLY, MATT. A SWEET LITTLE BABY'D TAKE MY MIND OFF MY... PROBLEMS.
GREAT. I WAS COMING HOME ANYWAY. GIVE ME TWO MINUTES TO...
OH...
OH NO, KAREN... NOT YOU...
I NEVER TOLD YOU ABOUT THE BABY.
WHAT? OF COURSE YOU DID. THAT NIGHT -- WHEN I GOT BACK, AND I TOLD YOU ABOUT...
YOU CRIED YOURSELF TO SLEEP. I LEFT EARLY THE NEXT MORNING TO SEE FOGGY.
I NEVER TOLD YOU ABOUT THE BABY.
GOOD GOD, KAREN -- WHO GOT TO YOU?

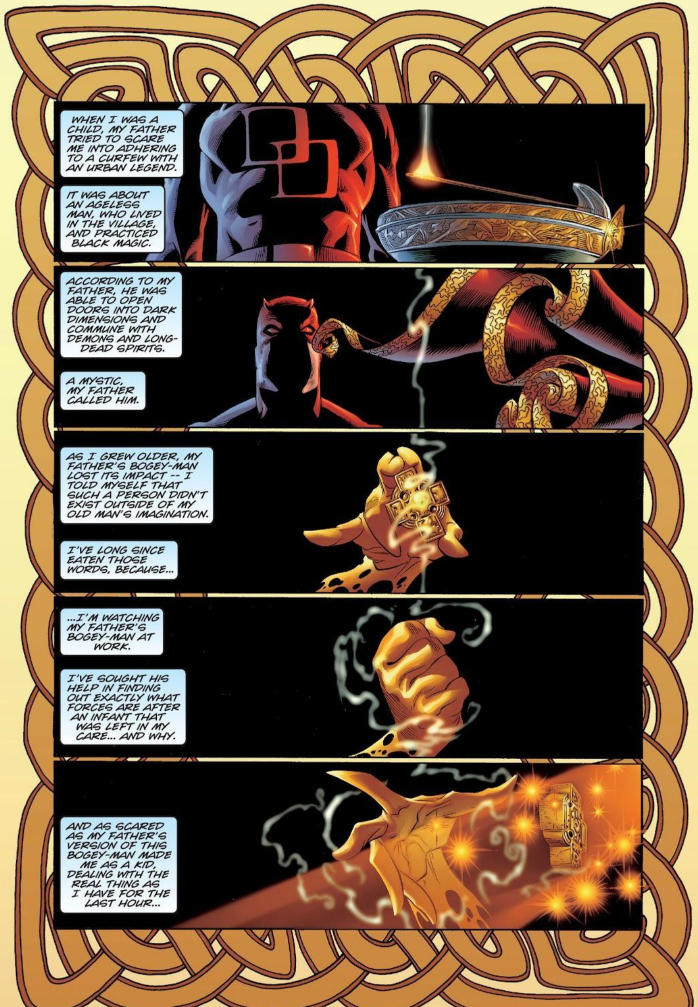

YOUR FRIEND -- THE OLD MAN. HE CAME TO OUR APARTMENT, AND TOLD ME ABOUT THE CURSE. HE SAID THE BABY'S RESPONSIBLE FOR EVERYTHING: FOGGY, YOU...
...MY INFECTION.
HE SAID... HE SAID I MIGHT HAVE EVEN INFECTED YOU, MATT.
I DIDN'T ALLOW MYSELF TO THINK ABOUT IT THE NIGHT KAREN TOLD ME. WITH ALL THAT'S HAPPENED OVER THE LAST WEEK, I'VE AVOIDED DWELLING ON IT.
BUT SHE'S JUST BROUGHT IT ALL HOME.
BUT ALL WE HAVE TO DO IS GIVE HIM THE BABY, MATT! IF WE GIVE HIM THE BABY, ALL THE EVIL GOES AWAY!
THAT'S WHAT YOUR FRIEND SAID! IF WE GIVE HIM THE BABY...
NO!!
YOU'RE BEING PLAYED, KAREN! HE'S PLAYING YOU -- LIKE HE TRIED TO PLAY ME!
LIKE HE DID PLAY ME! BUT MY HEAD IS CLEAR NOW! THAT BABY IS STAYING IN MY CARE UNTIL I FIND OUT EXACTLY WHAT THE STORY IS!
BUT IT'S EVIL! IT'S RUINING OUR LIVES! LOOK AT ME! I HAVE AIDS. BECAUSE OF THAT BABY!
YOU HAVE AIDS. BECAUSE YOU WERE A JUNKIE, KAREN! A JUNKIE WHO WAS WITH GOD ONLY KNOWS WHO AND HOW MANY PEOPLE!
YOUR CARELESSNESS DESTROYED YOUR LIFE, KAREN -- NOT SOME DEMON-CHILD! AND THAT CARELESSNESS MAY HAVE DESTROYED MY LIFE TOO, FOR ALL WE KNOW!
SO YOU WANT TO BLAME SOMEONE?! THEN BLAME YOURSELF!
GOD...
HELP ME.
I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOUR GAME IS, OLD MAN -- BUT I KNOW SOMEONE WHO CAN HELP ME FIND OUT.
AND WHEN I DO...

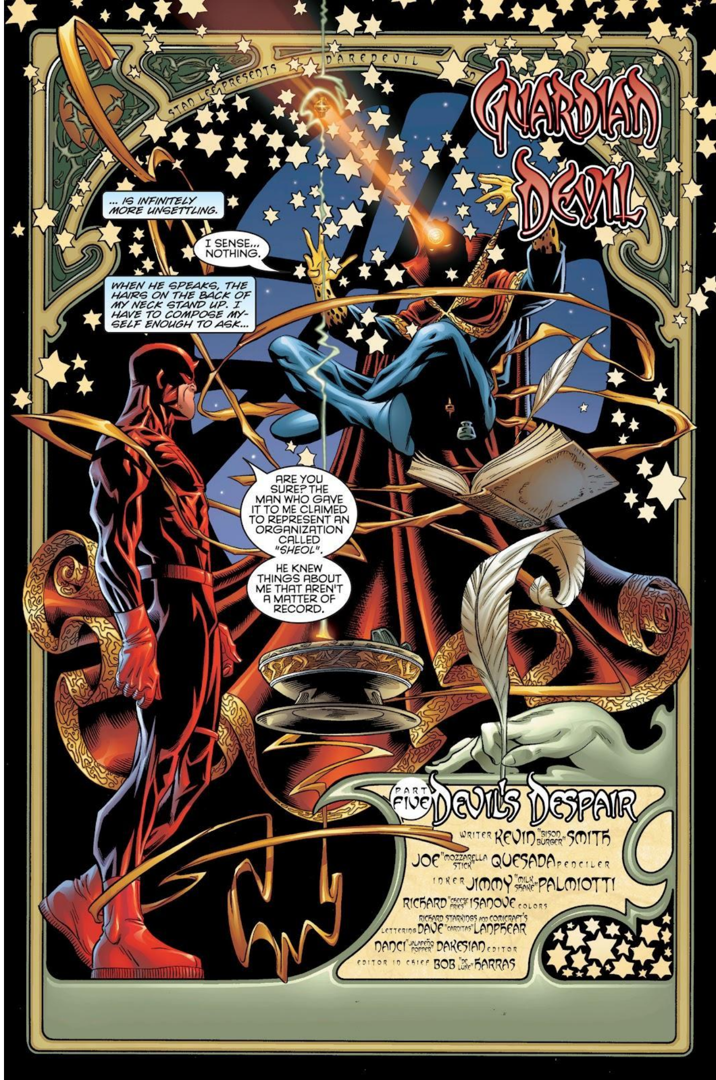

...YOU'RE GOING TO PAY...
WE'LL TALK PRICE IN A MOMENT. FIRST, THE PARAMETERS OF YOUR TASK: I ASK ONLY THAT YOU DELIVER THE INFANT TO ME, AND INFLICT MAXIMUM DAMAGE TO WHEREVER YOU FIND THE WHELP... AND TO WHOMEVER HAS BEEN HIDING IT.
EXCEPT THE VIGILANTE HIMSELF -- HE IS TO BE LEFT ALIVE. BATTER HIM AS MUCH AS IT PLEASES YOU, THOUGH -- I UNDERSTAND YOU HAVE A FEW AXES TO GRIND.
IT IS, AFTER ALL, THE MAIN REASON I SOUGHT OUT A KILLER TO PERFORM WHAT IS ESSENTIALLY A BAGMAN'S JOB -- YOUR HISTORY WITH THE INFANT'S CARETAKER.
FOR THIS SERVICE, I'M PREPARED TO OFFER YOU FIVE MILLION DOLLARS.
DO WE HAVE AN AGREEMENT?
SIR?
FLP
PP
CRACK
CHK
I'M SORRY...
FUP
The CATCHER in the RYE

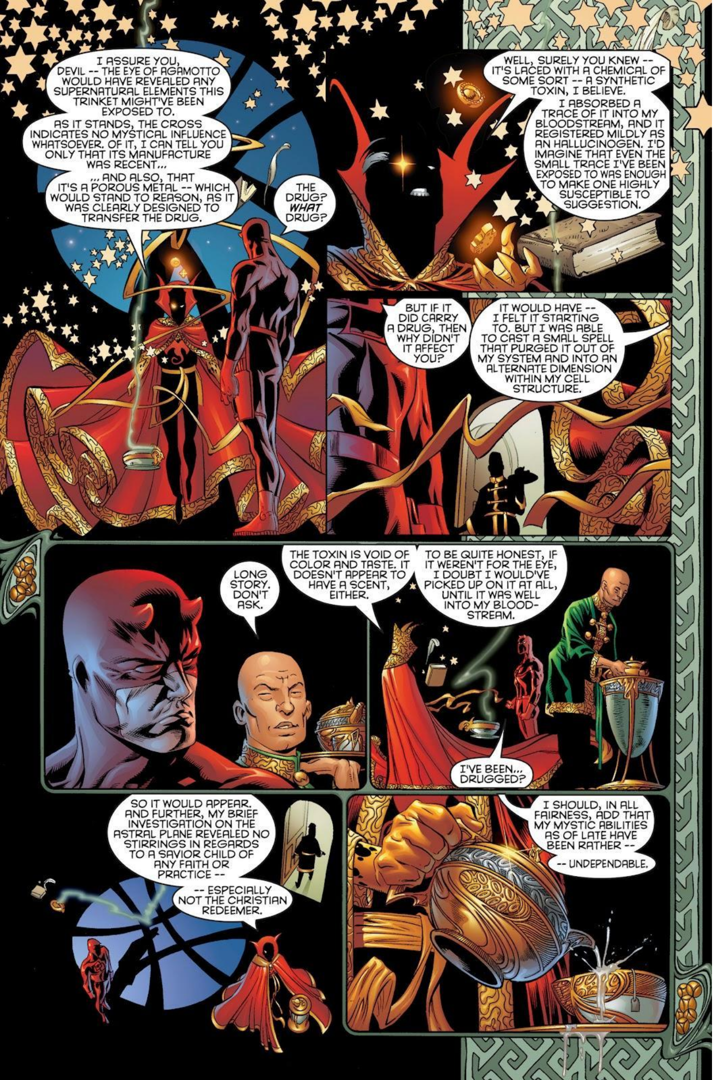

I HAD TO MARK MY PLACE.
YES -- WE HAVE A DEAL.
"A classic!" –Bryan Johnson
"Awesome!" –Walt Flanagan
"A spellbinding tale." –Scott Mosier
"Too many words, man." –Jay
–Bob



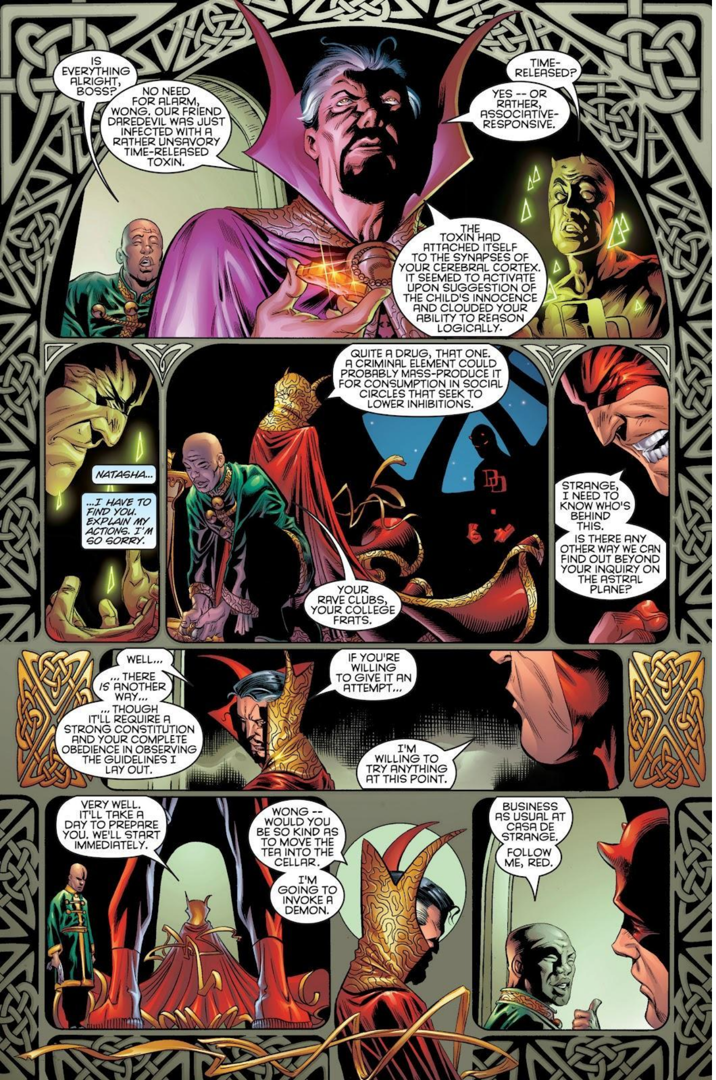
MARVEL
KNIGHTS
MAR
#5
WWW.MARVEL.COM
HERE COMES...
DAREDEVIL
THE MAN WITHOUT FEAR!
SMITH
QUESADA
PALMIOTTI

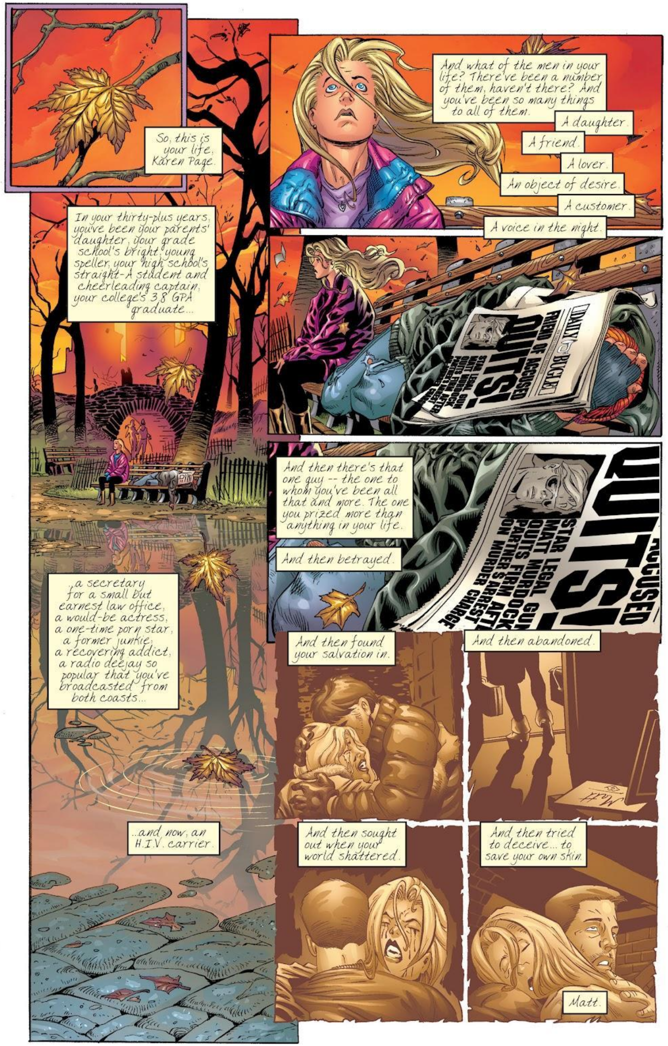

WHEN I WAS A CHILD, MY FATHER TRIED TO SCARE ME INTO ADHERING TO A CURFEW WITH AN URBAN LEGEND.
IT WAS ABOUT AN AGELESS MAN, WHO LIVED IN THE VILLAGE, AND PRACTICED BLACK MAGIC.
ACCORDING TO MY FATHER, HE WAS ABLE TO OPEN DOORS INTO DARK DIMENSIONS AND COMMUNE WITH DEMONS AND LONG-DEAD SPIRITS.
A MYSTIC, MY FATHER CALLED HIM.
AS I GREW OLDER, MY FATHER'S BOGEY-MAN LOST ITS IMPACT -- I TOLD MYSELF THAT SUCH A PERSON DIDN'T EXIST OUTSIDE OF MY OLD MAN'S IMAGINATION.
I'VE LONG SINCE EATEN THOSE WORDS, BECAUSE...
...I'M WATCHING MY FATHER'S BOGEY-MAN AT WORK.
I'VE SOUGHT HIS HELP IN FINDING OUT EXACTLY WHAT FORCES ARE AFTER AN INFANT THAT WAS LEFT IN MY CARE... AND WHY.
AND AS SCARED AS MY FATHER'S VERSION OF THIS BOGEY-MAN MADE ME AS A KID, DEALING WITH THE REAL THING AS I HAVE FOR THE LAST HOUR...


STAN LEE PRESENTS DAREDEVIL
GUARDIAN DEVIL
... IS INFINITELY MORE UNSETTLING.
I SENSE... NOTHING.
WHEN HE SPEAKS, THE HAIRS ON THE BACK OF MY NECK STAND UP. I HAVE TO COMPOSE MYSELF ENOUGH TO ASK...
ARE YOU SURE? THE MAN WHO GAVE IT TO ME CLAIMED TO REPRESENT AN ORGANIZATION CALLED "SHEOL".
HE KNEW THINGS ABOUT ME THAT AREN'T A MATTER OF RECORD.
PART FIVE DEVIL'S DESPAIR
WRITER KEVIN "BISON BURGER" SMITH
JOE "MOZZARELLA STICK" QUESADA PENCILER
INKER JIMMY "MILK SHAKE" PALMIOTTI
RICHARD "CHEESE FRIES" ISANOVE COLORS
RICHARD STARKINGS AND COMICRAFT'S
LETTERING DAVE "CARNITAS" LANPHEAR
NANCI "JALAPEÑO POPPER" DAKESIAN EDITOR
EDITOR IN CHIEF BOB "DE LUXE" HARRAS


I ASSURE YOU, DEVIL -- THE EYE OF AGAMOTTO WOULD HAVE REVEALED ANY SUPERNATURAL ELEMENTS THIS TRINKET MIGHT'VE BEEN EXPOSED TO.
AS IT STANDS, THE CROSS INDICATES NO MYSTICAL INFLUENCE WHATSOEVER. OF IT, I CAN TELL YOU ONLY THAT ITS MANUFACTURE WAS RECENT...
...AND ALSO, THAT IT'S A POROUS METAL -- WHICH WOULD STAND TO REASON, AS IT WAS CLEARLY DESIGNED TO TRANSFER THE DRUG.
THE DRUG? WHAT DRUG?
WELL, SURELY YOU KNEW -- IT'S LACED WITH A CHEMICAL OF SOME SORT -- A SYNTHETIC TOXIN, I BELIEVE.
I ABSORBED A TRACE OF IT INTO MY BLOODSTREAM, AND IT REGISTERED MILDLY AS AN HALLUCINOGEN. I'D IMAGINE THAT EVEN THE SMALL TRACE I'VE BEEN EXPOSED TO WAS ENOUGH TO MAKE ONE HIGHLY SUSCEPTIBLE TO SUGGESTION.
BUT IF IT DID CARRY A DRUG, THEN WHY DIDN'T IT AFFECT YOU?
IT WOULD HAVE -- I FELT IT STARTING TO. BUT I WAS ABLE TO CAST A SMALL SPELL THAT PURGED IT OUT OF MY SYSTEM AND INTO AN ALTERNATE DIMENSION WITHIN MY CELL STRUCTURE.
LONG STORY. DON'T ASK.
THE TOXIN IS VOID OF COLOR AND TASTE. IT DOESN'T APPEAR TO HAVE A SCENT, EITHER.
TO BE QUITE HONEST, IF IT WEREN'T FOR THE EYE, I DOUBT I WOULD'VE PICKED UP ON IT AT ALL, UNTIL IT WAS WELL INTO MY BLOODSTREAM.
I'VE BEEN... DRUGGED?
SO IT WOULD APPEAR. AND FURTHER, MY BRIEF INVESTIGATION ON THE ASTRAL PLANE REVEALED NO STIRRINGS IN REGARDS TO A SAVIOR CHILD OF ANY FAITH OR PRACTICE --
-- ESPECIALLY NOT THE CHRISTIAN REDEEMER.
I SHOULD, IN ALL FAIRNESS, ADD THAT MY MYSTIC ABILITIES AS OF LATE HAVE BEEN RATHER --
-- UNDEPENDABLE.

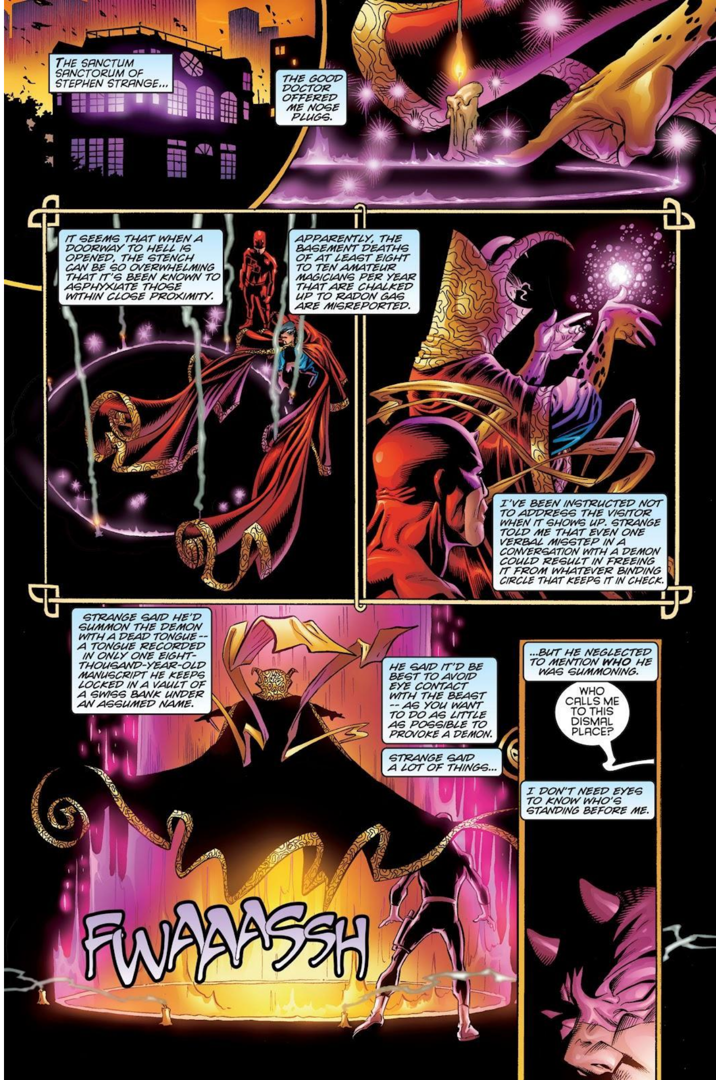

BUT YOU'RE NOT CERTAIN THE CHILD ISN'T WHAT I WAS TOLD?
I APOLOGIZE, DEVIL -- I'M NOT CERTAIN OF MUCH THESE DAYS.
IT... IT CAN'T BE. HE'S WRONG! HE'S...
IN ON IT.
PERHAPS IF YOU WERE TO BRING THE CHILD HERE, I CAN BE OF MORE ASSISTANCE.
YOU'D LIKE THAT, WOULDN'T YOU, OLD WARLOCK? YOU WANT ME TO BRING THE CHILD TO YOU, SO YOU CAN RAISE THE DEMON SEED INTO HUMANITY'S DESTROYER!
I SHOULD'VE KNOWN BETTER THAN TO TRUST A PRACTITIONER OF THE BLACK ARTS.
ESPECIALLY ONE WHO'S, NO DOUBT, EXERTING SUGGESTIVE SPELLS TO CLOUD MY THINKING.
WELL, ALLOW ME TO RETURN THE FAVOR...
...PHYSICALLY!
CRASH
THE TOXIN IS AGAIN ACTIVE IN YOUR SYSTEM!
I'M REMOVING IT WITH THE SAME INCANTATION I USED ON MYSELF.
THERE...
...IT'S GONE.
MY GOD...
HOW DO YOU FEEL?
I FEEL...
...CLEAR.
THANKS, DOC.


IS EVERYTHING ALRIGHT, BOSS?
NO NEED FOR ALARM, WONG. OUR FRIEND DAREDEVIL WAS JUST INFECTED WITH A RATHER UNSAVORY TIME-RELEASED TOXIN.
TIME-RELEASED?
YES -- OR RATHER, ASSOCIATIVE-RESPONSIVE.
THE TOXIN HAD ATTACHED ITSELF TO THE SYNAPSES OF YOUR CEREBRAL CORTEX. IT SEEMED TO ACTIVATE UPON SUGGESTION OF THE CHILD'S INNOCENCE AND CLOUDED YOUR ABILITY TO REASON LOGICALLY.
NATASHA...
...I HAVE TO FIND YOU. EXPLAIN MY ACTIONS. I'M SO SORRY.
QUITE A DRUG, THAT ONE. A CRIMINAL ELEMENT COULD PROBABLY MASS-PRODUCE IT FOR CONSUMPTION IN SOCIAL CIRCLES THAT SEEK TO LOWER INHIBITIONS.
YOUR RAVE CLUBS, YOUR COLLEGE FRATS.
STRANGE, I NEED TO KNOW WHO'S BEHIND THIS.
IS THERE ANY OTHER WAY WE CAN FIND OUT BEYOND YOUR INQUIRY ON THE ASTRAL PLANE?
WELL...
... THERE IS ANOTHER WAY...
... THOUGH IT'LL REQUIRE A STRONG CONSTITUTION AND YOUR COMPLETE OBEDIENCE IN OBSERVING THE GUIDELINES I LAY OUT.
IF YOU'RE WILLING TO GIVE IT AN ATTEMPT...
I'M WILLING TO TRY ANYTHING AT THIS POINT.
VERY WELL. IT'LL TAKE A DAY TO PREPARE YOU. WE'LL START IMMEDIATELY.
WONG -- WOULD YOU BE SO KIND AS TO MOVE THE TEA INTO THE CELLAR.
I'M GOING TO INVOKE A DEMON.
BUSINESS AS USUAL AT CASA DE STRANGE.
FOLLOW ME, RED.


So, this is your life, Karen Page.
And what of the men in your life? There've been a number of them, haven't there? And you've been so many things to all of them.
A daughter.
A friend.
A lover.
An object of desire.
A customer.
A voice in the night.
In your thirty-plus years, you've been your parents' daughter, your grade school's bright, young speller, your high school's straight-A student and cheerleading captain, your college's 3.8 GPA graduate...
DAILY BUGLE
FRIEND OF ACCUSED QUITS!
...a secretary for a small but earnest law office, a would-be actress, a one-time porn star, a former junkie, a recovering addict, a radio deejay so popular that you've broadcasted from both coasts...
And then there's that one guy -- the one to whom you've been all that and more. The one you prized more than anything in your life.
And then betrayed.
ACCUSED QUITS!
STAR LEGAL GUN MATT MURDOCK QUIT MUDAL PARTNER FIRDOCK AFTER ON MURDER CHARGE
...and now, an H.I.V. carrier.
And then found your salvation in.
And then abandoned.
And then sought out when your world shattered.
And then tried to deceive... to save your own skin.
Matt.



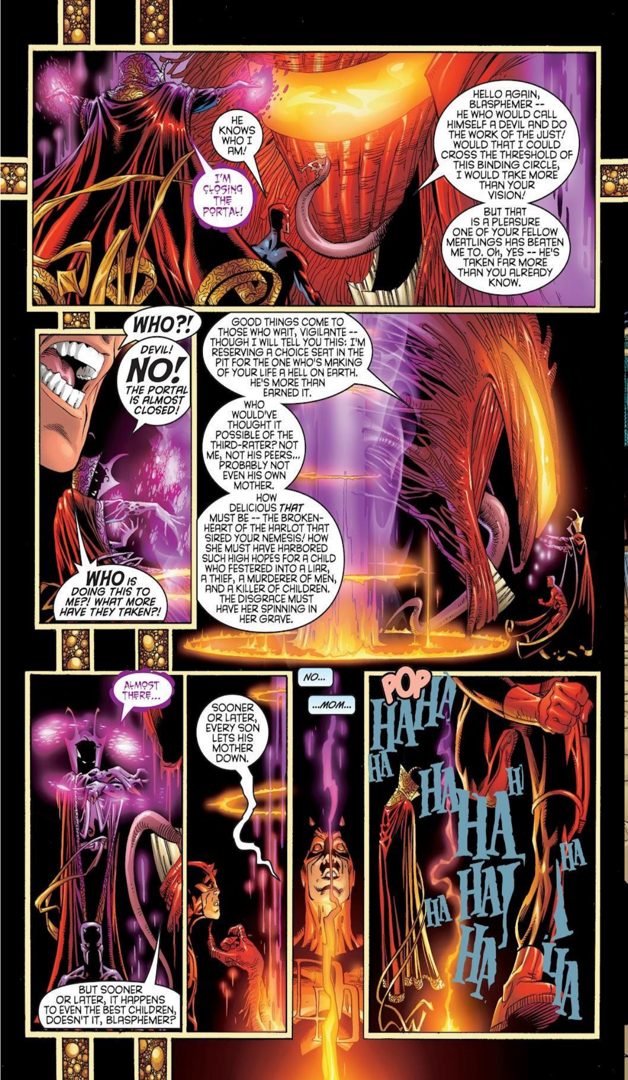
It's always been you, Matt. You're the pivot point that's given my adult life balance.
No matter what I've done, or where I've gone, I always come back to you.
In my haste to unload my problems on you, I never thought to ask what was going on in your life -- your lives -- even after what that Old Man told me.
It's something I've always taken for granted -- you practice law by day, you practice justice by night. And you've always made it seem effortless.
But it's always been bigger than you, hasn't it, love?
You've been able to stay one step ahead of madness or the grave through it all, but how can one step ever be enough? And where's the margin for error?
That's always been the unspoken fear, hasn't it, Matt? The thing that'd plague you in your sleep, when I held you on the rare nights you were home...
That one day, you'll stumble, and whatever darkness laps at your heels will swallow you whole.
Is this that time, love? Is the darkness bearing down closer than it ever has? And are you running out of strength to stay ahead of it?
You need me, Matt -- now more than ever. You need my strength to ally with your own, and maybe then we can both outrace the void.
And in order to give you my strength, I have to muster it -- not collapse into your arms, hoping you'll fix it all again. I've spent most of my life -- our life -- doing that, haven't I? Perhaps this is the time that instead of collapsing -- either of us -- we should be leaning on one another... as equals.
A partnership. One that -- for the first time in years -- can be built on level ground. Two broken souls, that, together, can be whole.
I need you now, yes -- more than ever.
But you need me -- just as much.
MURDOCK QUITS! (CONT)
MURDERER?
Foggy Nelson gained media attention as an associate of Hell's Kitchen vigilante Daredevil
'CURTAIN' CALL
One-time "Creature Fea King" John Curtain found murdered in Hollywoo



THE SANCTUM SANCTORUM OF STEPHEN STRANGE...
THE GOOD DOCTOR OFFERED ME NOSE PLUGS.
IT SEEMS THAT WHEN A DOORWAY TO HELL IS OPENED, THE STENCH CAN BE SO OVERWHELMING THAT IT'S BEEN KNOWN TO ASPHYXIATE THOSE WITHIN CLOSE PROXIMITY.
APPARENTLY, THE BASEMENT DEATHS OF AT LEAST EIGHT TO TEN AMATEUR MAGICIANS PER YEAR THAT ARE CHALKED UP TO RADON GAS ARE MISREPORTED.
I'VE BEEN INSTRUCTED NOT TO ADDRESS THE VISITOR WHEN IT SHOWS UP. STRANGE TOLD ME THAT EVEN ONE VERBAL MISSTEP IN A CONVERSATION WITH A DEMON COULD RESULT IN FREEING IT FROM WHATEVER BINDING CIRCLE THAT KEEPS IT IN CHECK.
STRANGE SAID HE'D SUMMON THE DEMON WITH A DEAD TONGUE -- A TONGUE RECORDED IN ONLY ONE EIGHT-THOUSAND-YEAR-OLD MANUSCRIPT HE KEEPS LOCKED IN A VAULT OF A SWISS BANK UNDER AN ASSUMED NAME.
HE SAID IT'D BE BEST TO AVOID EYE CONTACT WITH THE BEAST -- AS YOU WANT TO DO AS LITTLE AS POSSIBLE TO PROVOKE A DEMON.
STRANGE SAID A LOT OF THINGS...
FWAAAASSH
...BUT HE NEGLECTED TO MENTION WHO HE WAS SUMMONING.
WHO CALLS ME TO THIS DISMAL PLACE?
I DON'T NEED EYES TO KNOW WHO'S STANDING BEFORE ME.


WHO DARES TO SUMMON MEPHISTO?
PRIMITIVE...
... WHAT MANNER OF FOOL IS RESPONSIBLE FOR THIS CLOWNISH PRISON?
YOU ARE CALLED HERE BY A MAGUS OF THE HIGHEST ORDER FOR AN INQUISITION.
STRANGE. I RECOGNIZE YOUR BRAYING.
WE HAVE DANCED AS THIS BEFORE, BUT NEVER WITH BLINDERS. WHAT PROMPTS THIS SECRECY NOW?
ZZZT
WITHIN THE BINDING CIRCLE, YOU MAY ASK OF ME NO QUESTIONS, AND PROVIDE ONLY ANSWERS, BEAST.
AH -- YOU'RE PLAYING THE ROLE WITH ALL THE STOPS PULLED OUT, AREN'T YOU, MYSTIC?
THIS ISN'T A CONVERSATION -- IT'S A PERFORMANCE.
HE DOESN'T REMEMBER ME.
YOU'VE ENCOUNTERED MEPHISTO BEFORE?
I KNOW THIS THING, YES.
THEN YOU KNOW HOW DANGEROUS HE IS. I'VE ENCODED AN OBSTRUCTION INTO THE BINDING CIRCLE. HE'LL BE UNABLE TO SEE US, THOUGH I DON'T KNOW FOR HOW LONG.
DO NOT RESPOND. DO NOT SPEAK.
ZZZT
YOU'VE BROUGHT A FRIEND, I GATHER. BUT YOU'RE SO TERSE WITH YOUR UNSEEN GUEST, GOOD DOCTOR.
WHAT IS IT THAT DISTURBS YOU, STEPHEN?
MEPHISTO LAUGHS QUIETLY. IT RATTLES STRANGE'S NERVES -- I HEAR HIS PULSE RISE AND THEN CALM AGAIN, AS HE REGAINS HIS COMPOSURE AND SAYS...
BEAST, THERE ARE THOSE WHO PURPORT THAT THE CHRISTIAN REDEEMER HAS RETURNED TO THIS PLANE AS AN INFANT. I COMMAND YOU WHO STANDS WITHIN THE CONFINES OF THIS BINDING CIRCLE TO TELL ME IF THERE IS ANY VALIDITY TO THEIR CLAIMS.
AND THINK TWICE BEFORE YOU OFFER A LIE, LEST I CLOSE THIS WINDOW, AND RETURN YOU TO PERDITION.


YOU SAY THAT AS IF IT'S A THREAT.
BUT I'LL PLAY YOUR VOCAL-APE'S GAME, STRANGE -- IF FOR NO OTHER REASON THAN IT AMUSES ME TO DO SO AT THIS TIME.
SO YOUR COMPANION WANTS TO KNOW IF JOHN'S FORETOLD APOCALYPSE IS NIGH, eh? IF I HAD A SOUL FOR EVERY TIME I'M ASKED THAT QUESTION...
ANSWER THE QUERY, PIT-DWELLER -- OR THIS CONFERENCE IS AT AN END.
WHY IS ONE SO MIGHTY AS MYSELF BROUGHT HERE TO INSTRUCT AS A SUNDAY SCHOOL TEACHER? HAVE YOUR CHRISTIAN FRIEND READ HIS BIBLE -- MORE SPECIFICALLY, THE APOSTLE JOHN'S BOOK OF REVELATIONS. WHEN THE SO-CALLED SON OF GOD RETURNS, PRESUMABLY TO END HIS FATHER'S FLOUNDERING EXERCISE...
... THE BLUNDER KNOWN AS MANKIND...
... IT WON'T BE AS HE CAME ORIGINALLY. IN A RARE FIT OF GOOD SENSE, HE IS PROPHESIED TO RETURN NOT BORN OF A LOWLY WOMAN, BUT AS JUDGE, JURY, AND EXECUTIONER -- AS A LION, NOT A LAMB. AS THAT WHICH WILL END YOUR WORLD AND DELIVER THE PURE TO HIS FATHER... AND THE REST TO US.
NOW, I'M NO LITERARY MAJOR, BUT I'D SAY THE TEXT IS INDICATING A FAR DIFFERENT MANIFESTATION OF THE SO-CALLED REDEEMER THAN AS A HUMAN INFANT, WOULDN'T YOU, MY INQUISITIVE FRIEND OF STRANGE?
MY GOD... HE'S RIGHT. BIBLICALLY, THE SAVIOR IS TO COME BACK AS HE LEFT -- A MAN.
WHY, STEPHEN -- HAS SOMEONE TRICKED YOUR FRIEND INTO BELIEVING THE INFANT SAVIOR'S BEEN LEFT IN HIS CARE? CAN YOUR FRIEND REALLY HAVE BEEN SO...
... BLIND?
HE KNOWS.
PROVE TO ME YOUR OMNISCIENCE, MEPHISTO, AND REVEAL WHO IT IS THAT SOWS THESE UNTRUTHS.



HE KNOWS WHO I AM!
I'M CLOSING THE PORTAL!
HELLO AGAIN, BLASPHEMER -- HE WHO WOULD CALL HIMSELF A DEVIL AND DO THE WORK OF THE JUST! WOULD THAT I COULD CROSS THE THRESHOLD OF THIS BINDING CIRCLE, I WOULD TAKE MORE THAN YOUR VISION!
BUT THAT IS A PLEASURE ONE OF YOUR FELLOW MEATLINGS HAS BEATEN ME TO. OH, YES -- HE'S TAKEN FAR MORE THAN YOU ALREADY KNOW.
WHO?!
DEVIL! NO! THE PORTAL IS ALMOST CLOSED!
GOOD THINGS COME TO THOSE WHO WAIT, VIGILANTE -- THOUGH I WILL TELL YOU THIS: I'M RESERVING A CHOICE SEAT IN THE PIT FOR THE ONE WHO'S MAKING OF YOUR LIFE A HELL ON EARTH. HE'S MORE THAN EARNED IT.
WHO WOULD'VE THOUGHT IT POSSIBLE OF THE THIRD-RATER? NOT ME, NOT HIS PEERS... PROBABLY NOT EVEN HIS OWN MOTHER.
HOW DELICIOUS THAT MUST BE -- THE BROKEN-HEART OF THE HARLOT THAT SIRED YOUR NEMESIS! HOW SHE MUST HAVE HARBORED SUCH HIGH HOPES FOR A CHILD WHO FESTERED INTO A LIAR, A THIEF, A MURDERER OF MEN, AND A KILLER OF CHILDREN. THE DISGRACE MUST HAVE HER SPINNING IN HER GRAVE.
WHO IS DOING THIS TO ME?! WHAT MORE HAVE THEY TAKEN?!
ALMOST THERE...
BUT SOONER OR LATER, IT HAPPENS TO EVEN THE BEST CHILDREN, DOESN'T IT, BLASPHEMER?
SOONER OR LATER, EVERY SON LETS HIS MOTHER DOWN.
NO...
...MOM...
POP
HAHA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA



THE CLINTON MISSION SHELTER...
I HAVE TO CHOKE BACK THE BILE THAT'S RISING IN MY THROAT.
THE ROOM REEKS WITH THE STENCH OF SILENCED TERROR AND DEATH.
THERE ARE MOMENTS WHEN I'M ALMOST GLAD I CAN'T SEE.
THIS IS ONE OF THEM.
MAGGIE!
UHH...
D... DARE... DEVIL...
DON'T MOVE...
HE... KILLED SISTER THERESA FIRST... WITH HER OWN ROSARY BEADS...
HE SAID... HE SAID HE'D KILL US... ONE BY ONE... IF WE DIDN'T GIVE HIM THE BABY... BUT I... HID HER...
THE THINGS HE DID... TO SISTER ANNE...
I HAVE TO KNOW WHEN HE LEFT, MAGGIE.
WHEN DID HE LEAVE?
WHEN A BODY MEETS A BODY, COMING THROUGH THE RYE...
HE DIDN'T.
WRY -- AIN'T IT, RED?
IF YOU'RE THE LITERARY TYPE, YOU'LL BE ABLE TO CALL THIS ONE, DEVIL.
I CAN'T GET A BEAD ON HIM. THE ACOUSTICS IN THE OLD CHURCH ARE THROWING ECHOES BACK AT ME.
NO? C'MON -- IT'S TOO EASY...
IT SOUNDS LIKE IT'S COMING FROM...
THERE.
YOU'RE THE CATCHER. GET IT?
YOU'RE THE CATCHER IN THE WRY.
BUT YOU KNOW WHAT EVERY GOOD CATCHER NEEDS?



A PITCHER!
THE FIRST THREE ARE DISTRACTIONS...
...FOR THE FOURTH.
THIS ONE WAS MEANT FOR MY JUGULAR.
CRAZED SONOVA...
KRAK
FAP
FLFLP
ANYTHING'S A WEAPON IN HIS HANDS.
TAK TAK
THE TEETH WERE MEANT FOR MY EYES.
SAME OL' RED. THAT'S WHY I CAME PREPARED THIS TIME.
I'M TIRED OF THIS VENDETTA BETWEEN YOU AND ME -- IT'S A WASTE OF MY TIME. YOU'RE THE ONLY GUY WHO'S EVER COME CLOSE TO GETTING ON MY NERVES.
HATE ADMITTING IT, BUT YOU'RE ALMOST MY BETTER.
SO IN AN EFFORT TO AFFORD MYSELF HALF A SHOT...
...I'M GONNA HAVE TO SUBVERT MY PRINCIPLES A BIT.
KA-BLAMM



UNNFF!
NOW WE'RE EVEN.
THE PAIN...
...WORSE THAN WHEN NATASHA SHOT ME.
DROWN IT OUT, MURDOCK.
HAVE TO KEEP BULLSEYE AT BAY.
YOU LITTLE... HYUUUUKK!
RUMOR HAS IT HIS SKELETON IS REINFORCED WITH ADAMANTIUM.
THAT BLOW CONFIRMED IT.
YOU WANNA WALK AWAY FROM THIS? YOU'LL GIMME THE KID. I AIN'T GETTING PAID TO KILL YOU...
...BUT I'M GONNA DO YOU FOR FREE.
JUST FOR LAUGHS.
GO TO HELL...
I ALREADY WROTE THAT TICKET...
...WITH ALL THE DEAD NUNS.
SPAP
SISTER!
KAREN...
WE'VE GOTTA GET YOU OF HERE!
NO, CHILD...
YOU MUST GO... GET HELP. HE'LL KILL MATTHEW...
...IF HE DOESN'T GET... THE CHILD...
THWAK
SISTER...
...WHERE'S THE BABY?

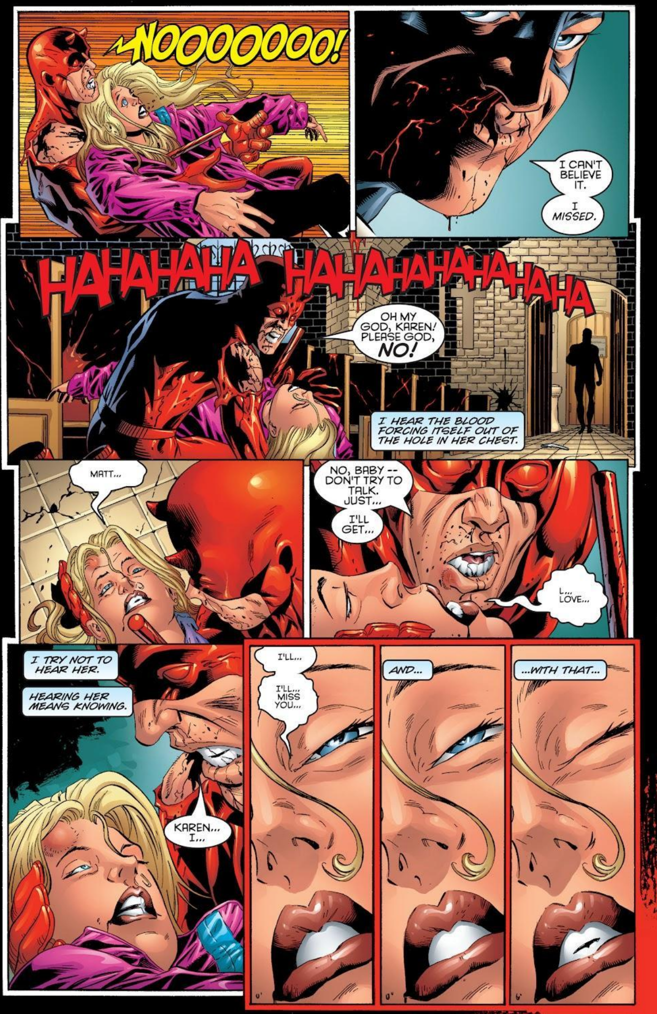

I'M WEAKENING...
...I'M NOT GOING TO BEAT HIM...
TELL ME WHERE THE KID IS, AND I'LL DO YOU QUICK!
MOTHER... I'M SORRY...
MOTHER...?
GIMME THE KID!
KRAKK
LET HIM GO!
LET HIM GO...
...AND I'LL GIVE YOU THE BABY.
WELL, WELL, WELL...
BIG HAND, FOR THE LITTLE LADY.
KAREN! NO..!
SPAK
PIPE DOWN, PUNCHY!
WE'RE IN THE MIDDLE OF NEGOTIATIONS!


EVENIN', MISS. NOW LEMME GET THIS STRAIGHT...
YOU WANNA TRADE THE NEWER MODEL FOR THE OLD BEATER?
IF YOU LET HIM LIVE, THE BABY IS YOURS.
IF WE HAVE A DEAL, STEP AWAY FROM DAREDEVIL.
WHAT CAN I SAY? I'M A SUCKER FOR THE LADIES.
THWACK
ANOTHER TIME THEN, RED.
HOW ABOUT WHEN WE'RE DONE HERE, YOU LET ME SHOW YOU WHAT A GREAT SHOT I AM?
JUST TAKE THE BABY AND GET OUT.
KAREN... YOU CAN'T...
THIS IS EASIER THAN TAKING CANDY FROM A...


YOU GOTTA BE KIDDIN' ME, LADY.
HOW COULD YOU DOUBLE-CROSS ME LIKE THAT?
IN A CHURCH, NO LESS.
THOCK
UUUUH!
WHERE THE HELL IS THE BABY?!?
WAAAH WAAAH
WAAAH WAAAH
WELL WHAD'YA KNOW?
OUT OF THE MOUTH OF BABES, AS THEY SAY.
DON'T...!

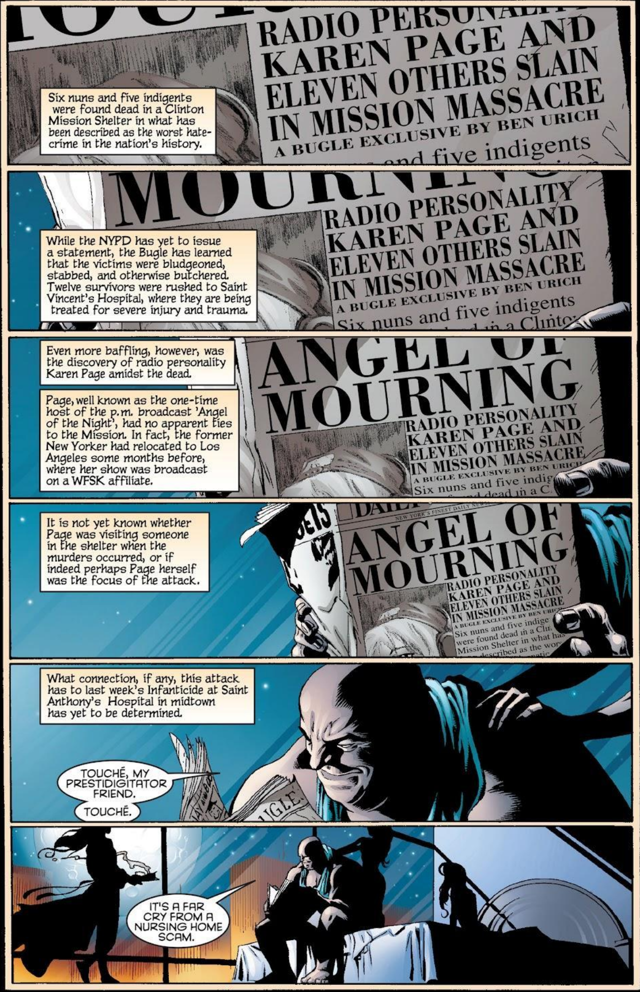

A PAGE FROM THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO BULLSEYE, SISTER...
NO ONE RISES FROM THE DEAD!
STOP!
PUT... THE BABY... DOWN!
MAN, YOU'RE A PERSISTENT BROAD.
FIRST RULE IN THE "CLEANING" BUSINESS...
CLIK
NEVER DISCARD A LOADED WEAPON.


I ONLY BROUGHT ONE BULLET, LADY. HOW'DYA THINK I GOT THE NAME?
YOU GOT CHUTZPAH, KID -- AND FOR THAT, I'M GONNA LET YOU LIVE.
'NIGHT, NOW.
WAIT A SECOND...
WHERE ARE MY MANNERS?
I ALMOST LEFT WITHOUT GIVING RED BACK HIS...
...CLUB!
MATT!!!
KAREN!!!

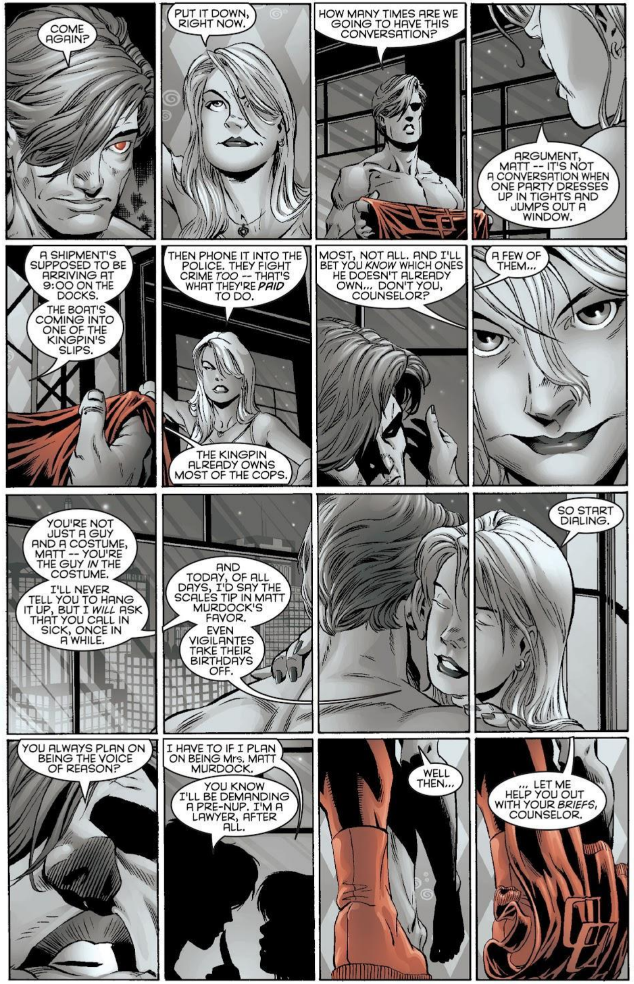

NOOOOOOO!
I CAN'T BELIEVE IT.
I MISSED.
HAHAHAHA HAHAHAHAHAHAHA
OH MY GOD, KAREN! PLEASE GOD, NO!
I HEAR THE BLOOD FORCING ITSELF OUT OF THE HOLE IN HER CHEST.
MATT...
NO, BABY -- DON'T TRY TO TALK. JUST...
I'LL GET...
L... LOVE...
I TRY NOT TO HEAR HER.
HEARING HER MEANS KNOWING.
KAREN... I...
I'LL...
I'LL... MISS YOU...
AND...
...WITH THAT...


...SHE'S GONE.

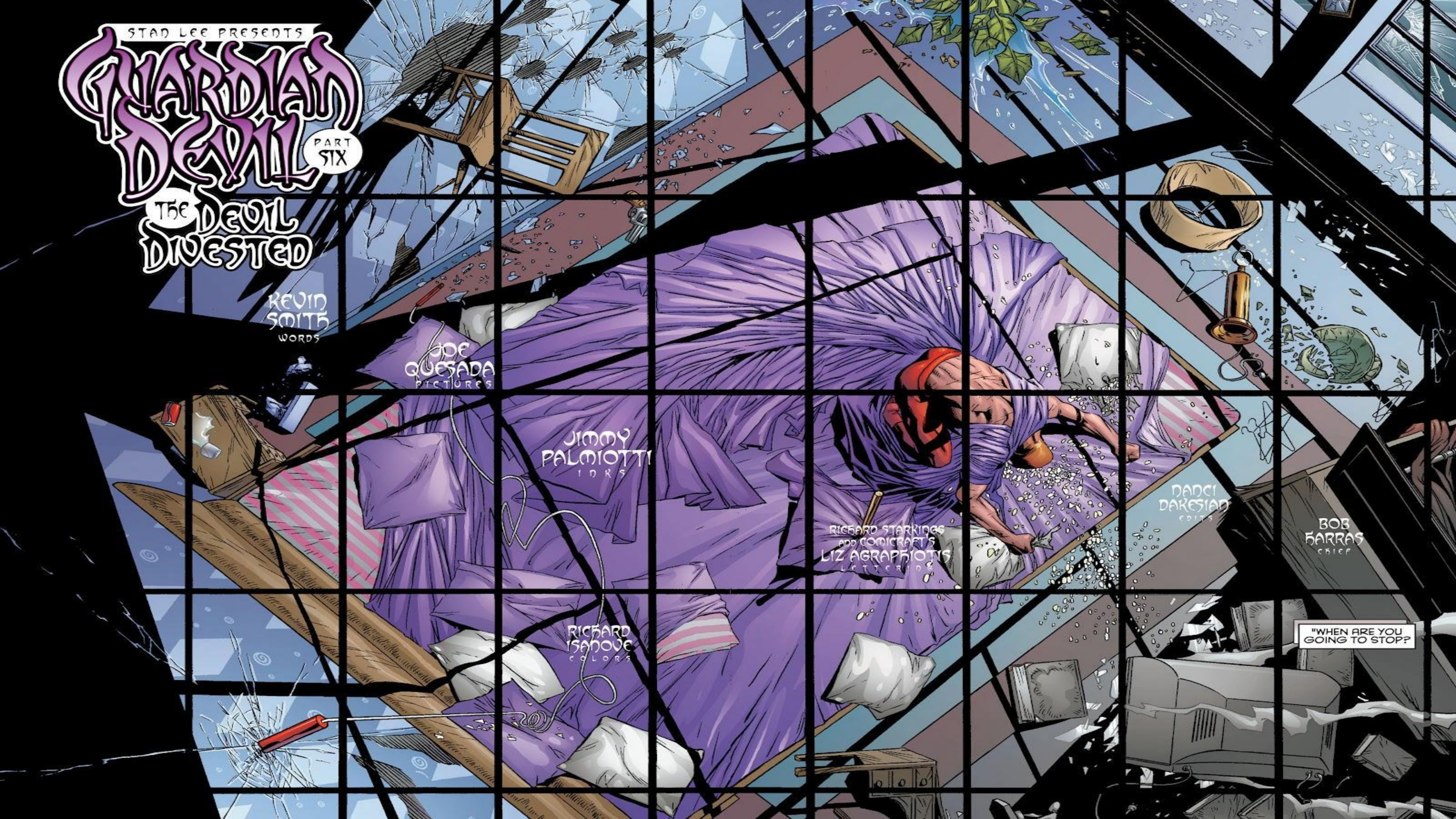

MARVEL
D D
KNIGHTS
MAR
#6
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SMITH
QUESADA
PALMIOTTI
HERE COMES...
DAREDEVIL
THE MAN WITHOUT FEAR!

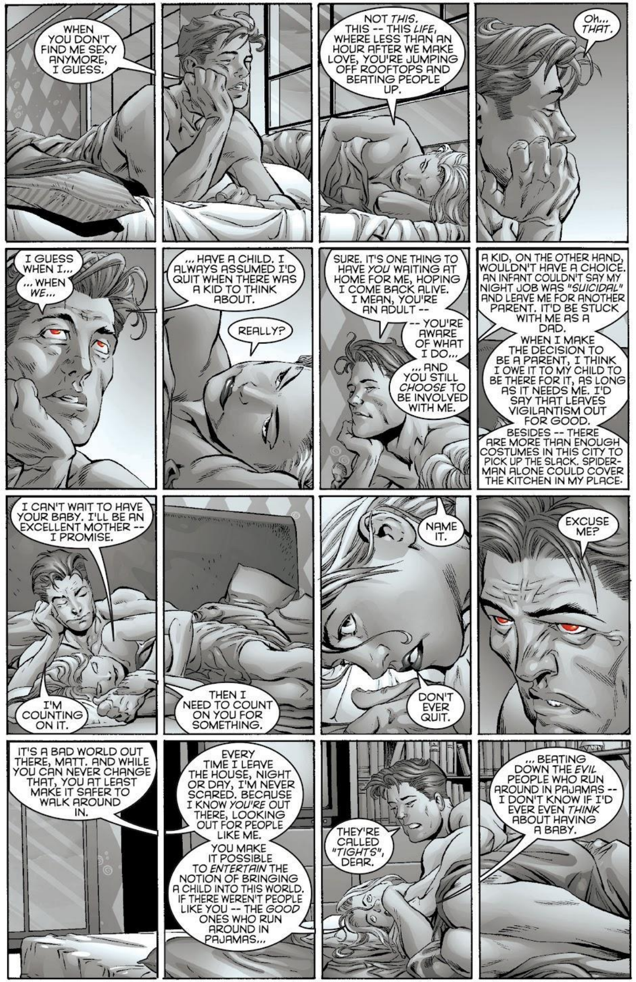

RADIO PERSONALITY KAREN PAGE AND ELEVEN OTHERS SLAIN IN MISSION MASSACRE
A BUGLE EXCLUSIVE BY BEN URICH
Six nuns and five indigents were found dead in a Clinton Mission Shelter in what has been described as the worst hate-crime in the nation's history.
While the NYPD has yet to issue a statement, the Bugle has learned that the victims were bludgeoned, stabbed, and otherwise butchered. Twelve survivors were rushed to Saint Vincent's Hospital, where they are being treated for severe injury and trauma.
ANGEL OF MOURNING
Even more baffling, however, was the discovery of radio personality Karen Page amidst the dead.
Page, well known as the one-time host of the p.m. broadcast 'Angel of the Night', had no apparent ties to the Mission. In fact, the former New Yorker had relocated to Los Angeles some months before, where her show was broadcast on a WFSK affiliate.
It is not yet known whether Page was visiting someone in the shelter when the murders occurred, or if indeed perhaps Page herself was the focus of the attack.
What connection, if any, this attack has to last week's Infanticide at Saint Anthony's Hospital in midtown has yet to be determined.
TOUCHÉ, MY PRESTIDIGITATOR FRIEND.
TOUCHÉ.
IT'S A FAR CRY FROM A NURSING HOME SCAM.


"PUT IT DOWN."


COME AGAIN?
PUT IT DOWN, RIGHT NOW.
HOW MANY TIMES ARE WE GOING TO HAVE THIS CONVERSATION?
ARGUMENT, MATT -- IT'S NOT A CONVERSATION WHEN ONE PARTY DRESSES UP IN TIGHTS AND JUMPS OUT A WINDOW.
A SHIPMENT'S SUPPOSED TO BE ARRIVING AT 9:00 ON THE DOCKS.
THE BOAT'S COMING INTO ONE OF THE KINGPIN'S SLIPS.
THEN PHONE IT INTO THE POLICE. THEY FIGHT CRIME *TOO* -- THAT'S WHAT THEY'RE *PAID* TO DO.
THE KINGPIN ALREADY OWNS MOST OF THE COPS.
MOST, NOT ALL. AND I'LL BET YOU *KNOW* WHICH ONES HE DOESN'T ALREADY OWN... DON'T YOU, COUNSELOR?
A FEW OF THEM...
YOU'RE NOT JUST A GUY AND A COSTUME, MATT -- YOU'RE THE GUY *IN* THE COSTUME.
I'LL NEVER TELL YOU TO HANG IT UP, BUT I *WILL* ASK THAT YOU CALL IN SICK, ONCE IN A WHILE.
AND TODAY, OF ALL DAYS, I'D SAY THE SCALES TIP IN MATT MURDOCK'S FAVOR.
EVEN VIGILANTES TAKE THEIR BIRTHDAYS OFF.
SO START DIALING.
YOU ALWAYS PLAN ON BEING THE VOICE OF REASON?
I HAVE TO IF I PLAN ON BEING Mrs. MATT MURDOCK.
YOU KNOW I'LL BE DEMANDING A PRE-NUP. I'M A LAWYER, AFTER ALL.
WELL THEN...
... LET ME HELP YOU OUT WITH YOUR *BRIEFS*, COUNSELOR.


"I LOVE YOU, MATT."
I LOVE YOU, KAREN.
AAAAGGGGHHH!


STAN LEE PRESENTS
GUARDIAN DEVIL
PART SIX
THE DEVIL DIVESTED
KEVIN SMITH WORDS
JOE QUESADA PICTURES
JIMMY PALMIOTTI INKS
RICHARD ISANOVE COLORS
RICHARD STARKINGS AND COMICRAFT'S LIZ AGRAPHIOTIS LETTERING
NANCI DAKESIAN EDITS
BOB HARRAS CHIEF
"WHEN ARE YOU GOING TO STOP?



WHEN YOU DON'T FIND ME SEXY ANYMORE, I GUESS.
NOT THIS. THIS -- THIS LIFE, WHERE LESS THAN AN HOUR AFTER WE MAKE LOVE, YOU'RE JUMPING OFF ROOFTOPS AND BEATING PEOPLE UP.
Oh... THAT.
I GUESS WHEN I...
...WHEN WE...
...HAVE A CHILD. I ALWAYS ASSUMED I'D QUIT WHEN THERE WAS A KID TO THINK ABOUT.
REALLY?
SURE. IT'S ONE THING TO HAVE YOU WAITING AT HOME FOR ME, HOPING I COME BACK ALIVE. I MEAN, YOU'RE AN ADULT --
-- YOU'RE AWARE OF WHAT I DO...
...AND YOU STILL CHOOSE TO BE INVOLVED WITH ME.
A KID, ON THE OTHER HAND, WOULDN'T HAVE A CHOICE. AN INFANT COULDN'T SAY MY NIGHT JOB WAS "SUICIDAL" AND LEAVE ME FOR ANOTHER PARENT. IT'D BE STUCK WITH ME AS A DAD.
WHEN I MAKE THE DECISION TO BE A PARENT, I THINK I OWE IT TO MY CHILD TO BE THERE FOR IT, AS LONG AS IT NEEDS ME. I'D SAY THAT LEAVES VIGILANTISM OUT FOR GOOD.
BESIDES -- THERE ARE MORE THAN ENOUGH COSTUMES IN THIS CITY TO PICK UP THE SLACK. SPIDER-MAN ALONE COULD COVER THE KITCHEN IN MY PLACE.
I CAN'T WAIT TO HAVE YOUR BABY. I'LL BE AN EXCELLENT MOTHER -- I PROMISE.
I'M COUNTING ON IT.
THEN I NEED TO COUNT ON YOU FOR SOMETHING.
NAME IT.
DON'T EVER QUIT.
EXCUSE ME?
IT'S A BAD WORLD OUT THERE, MATT. AND WHILE YOU CAN NEVER CHANGE THAT, YOU AT LEAST MAKE IT SAFER TO WALK AROUND IN.
EVERY TIME I LEAVE THE HOUSE, NIGHT OR DAY, I'M NEVER SCARED. BECAUSE I KNOW YOU'RE OUT THERE, LOOKING OUT FOR PEOPLE LIKE ME.
YOU MAKE IT POSSIBLE TO ENTERTAIN THE NOTION OF BRINGING A CHILD INTO THIS WORLD. IF THERE WEREN'T PEOPLE LIKE YOU -- THE GOOD ONES WHO RUN AROUND IN PAJAMAS...
THEY'RE CALLED "TIGHTS", DEAR.
...BEATING DOWN THE EVIL PEOPLE WHO RUN AROUND IN PAJAMAS -- I DON'T KNOW IF I'D EVER EVEN THINK ABOUT HAVING A BABY.



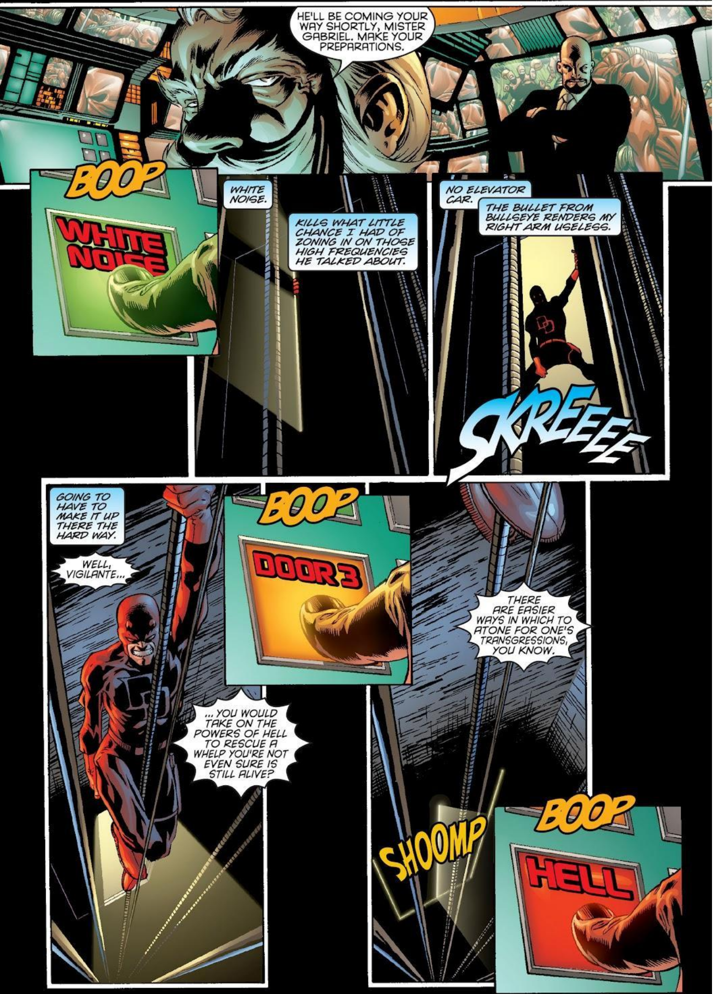
SO PROMISE ME, NO MATTER WHAT, THAT YOU'LL NEVER STOP!
I'LL TAKE CARE OF OUR CHILD...
...AND YOU MAKE SURE THERE'S SOME SANITY OUT THERE FOR OUR CHILD TO GROW UP IN.
NEVER STOP, MATT.
NO MATTER WHAT.
"NO MATTER WHAT.
"NO MATTER WHAT.
"NO MATTER WHAT.
"NO MATTER WHAT.
"NO MATTER WHAT.
I WON'T, KAREN.
I WON'T.
HE'LL BE COMING SOON.
PREPARE THE GAUNTLET.

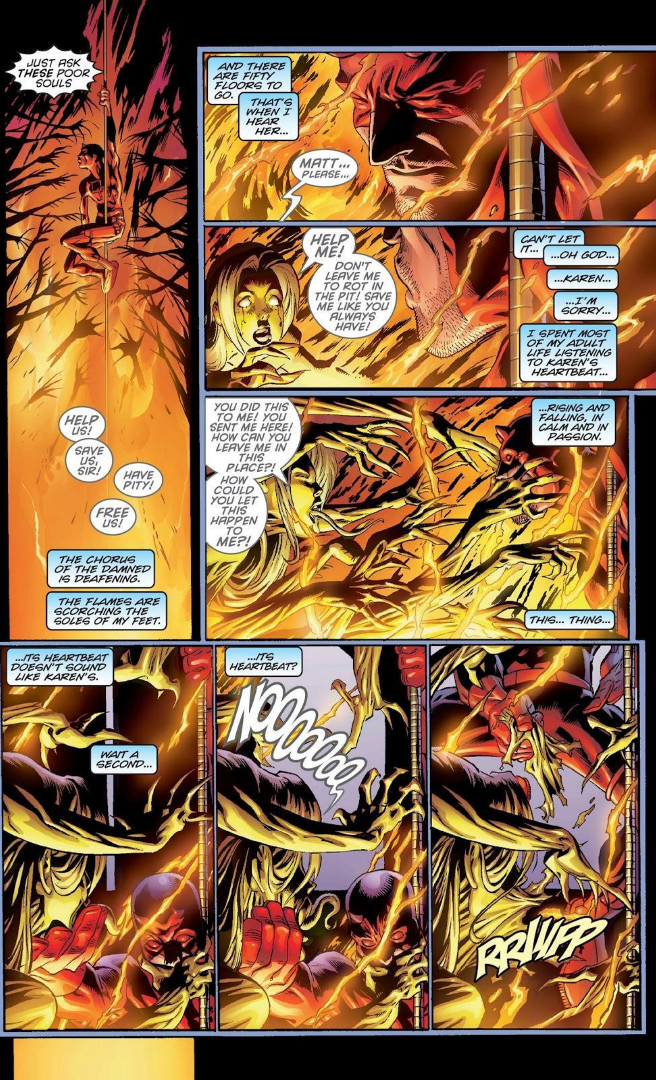

ENNIS' TAVERN, DOWNTOWN...
TELL THIS GUY THAT STORY YOU TOLD ME LAST NIGHT. THE ONE ABOUT HOW YOU KILLED DAREDEVIL THAT ONE TIME!
YEAH, LET'S HEAR IT!
DRINK DILLON ALE!
NAILS
C'MON, TURK!
ALLRIGHT, ALLRIGHT -- IT'S STORY-TIME.
SO ONE NIGHT, I FOLLOW HIM HOME -- BACK TO HIS... HIS...
HIS DEVIL-CAVE, RIGHT? IT'S LIKE HIS SECRET BASE, WHERE HE'S GOT A MILLION T.V.'S THAT WATCH OVER THE CITY. BUT I GOT THE DROP ON HIM, 'CAUSE HE TOOK HIS UTILITY BELT OFF.
THAT'S HOW HE'S ALWAYS BEATIN' GUYS -- WITH HIS STUPID UTILITY BELT.
WHERE DOES HE GET THOSE WONDERFUL TOYS?
I DUNNO, MAN -- BUT HE DIDN'T HAVE ANY OF 'EM THAT NIGHT. THAT'S WHEN I COLD-COCKS THE FREAK...
AND THEN I TIES HIM TO THIS...
THIS... GIANT DINOSAUR HE'S GOT.
IT WAS SOME KINDA TROPHY OR SOMETHING -- I DUNNO.
SO THEN I PROCEED TO GUT THAT PUNK, LIKE A FISH! I STICK THE KNIFE IN, AND I CUT HIM ALL THE WAY OPEN. AND HE SCREAMS LIKE A...
STUCK PIG?
YEAH! HE'S SQUEALING LIKE "BABE" OR SOMETHING, AND I'M LIKE "THIS IS FOR ALL MY PEEPS YOU EVER PUT AWAY!" AND THEN HE...
BEAT ON YOU UNTIL YOU GAVE HIM SOME INFORMATION?
WHAT?!? YOU CRAZY, MAN! I...
HEY, MAN -- WHERE IS EVERYBODY? I WASN'T...
... FINISHED.


DON' LEMME GO, MAN!
DON' LEMME GO!
IT'S YOUR TURN TO "SQUEAL LIKE A PIG", TURK.
BULLSEYE'S IN TOWN. WHAT DO YOU KNOW ABOUT IT?
I DON' KNOW NOTHIN' 'BOUT NO BULLSEYE!
THEN I DON'T KNOW HOW TO KEEP YOU FROM HITTING THE PAVEMENT.
ALLRIGHT! ALLRIGHT! HE WAS HERE! BUT THEN HE SPLIT!
HE LEFT THE CITY?
HE JETTED, MAN, I SWEAR! I THINK HE DID THOSE NUNS THE OTHER NIGHT! AND THE RADIO-LADY!
WHO HIRED HIM?
CREEEK
WHOA, MAN, STOP IT!
SOME GUY'S BEEN TAKING ON ALL THE LOCAL HELP FOR THE LAST MONTH! HE HIRED HIM! HE'S GOT A LOTTA PEOPLE ON THE PAYROLL!
A NAME, TURK.
I DUNNO HIS NAME! SOME OLD DUDE, I HEAR!
I AIN'T SEEN 'EM, 'CAUSE HIS BOYS WOULDN' HIRE ME!
BUT I HEAR HE'S GOT ALOTTA MONEY AND A MEAN-ON FOR YOU AND SOME BABY!
YOU SAID HIS PEOPLE DIDN'T HIRE YOU. WHERE DID YOU GET TURNED DOWN?
AT HIS BUILDING, MAN! 387 PARK AVENUE SOUTH! IT'S WHERE ALL THE HEAVY-HITTERS ARE MEETIN' TONIGHT!
WHAT "HEAVY-HITTERS"?
HE HIRED EVERYONE WHO WAS AVAILABLE FOR TONIGHT, 'CEPT ME! WORD IS HE'S GOT SOMETHING BIG GOIN' DOWN!
CREEEK
YOU WANNA TEAM UP, MAN?! LIKE OLD TIMES?! YOU AND ME, DD! HUNH? HOW 'BOUT IT?!
HEY MAN...


"WHERE YOU AT?!"
I GOT HIM, MISTER MACABES.
PEOPLE -- ONCE DAREDEVIL ENTERS THE BUILDING, I'LL BE TRANSMITTING YOUR INSTRUCTIONS ON THE HIGH-FREQUENCY CHANNELS. MAKE YOUR ADJUSTMENTS ACCORDINGLY.
MISTER CALIFORE...
... SHOOT TO WOUND, ONLY.
I'M GOING TO ENJOY THIS.
HEARD EVERY WORD.
POK
KRAK
UUGFF!
SHUF
FAP
"THAT'S MY BOY..."


FOR A MILLISECOND, I ALMOST BELIEVE IT'S THEM.
LET'S GIVE HIM A HAND...
WZZZ
BUT IF IT WAS THE HAND, I'D HAVE NEVER HEARD THEM COMING.
THEY'RE BARELY BROWN BELTS, ANY OF THEM.
THEY SMELL OF CHEAP LIQUOR AND CHEAPER DRUGS.
BUT MORE THAN THAT...
...THEY SMELL OF FEAR.
YOU'LL HAVE TO DO BETTER THAN THIS, MACABES...
SEVENTEEN SECONDS AFTER IT STARTS, I'M THROUGH YOUR FIRST LINE OF DEFENSE.


HE'LL BE COMING YOUR WAY SHORTLY, MISTER GABRIEL. MAKE YOUR PREPARATIONS.
BOOP
WHITE NOISE
WHITE NOISE.
KILLS WHAT LITTLE CHANCE I HAD OF ZONING IN ON THOSE HIGH FREQUENCIES HE TALKED ABOUT.
NO ELEVATOR CAR.
THE BULLET FROM BULLSEYE RENDERS MY RIGHT ARM USELESS.
SKREEEEE
GOING TO HAVE TO MAKE IT UP THERE THE HARD WAY.
WELL, VIGILANTE...
BOOP
DOOR 3
...YOU WOULD TAKE ON THE POWERS OF HELL TO RESCUE A WHELP YOU'RE NOT EVEN SURE IS STILL ALIVE?
THERE ARE EASIER WAYS IN WHICH TO ATONE FOR ONE'S TRANSGRESSIONS, YOU KNOW.
SHOOMP
BOOP
HELL


JUST ASK THESE POOR SOULS
AND THERE ARE FIFTY FLOORS TO GO.
THAT'S WHEN I HEAR HER...
MATT... PLEASE...
HELP ME!
DON'T LEAVE ME TO ROT IN THE PIT! SAVE ME LIKE YOU ALWAYS HAVE!
CAN'T LET IT...
...OH GOD...
...KAREN...
...I'M SORRY...
I SPENT MOST OF MY ADULT LIFE LISTENING TO KAREN'S HEARTBEAT...
HELP US!
SAVE US, SIR!
HAVE PITY!
FREE US!
THE CHORUS OF THE DAMNED IS DEAFENING.
THE FLAMES ARE SCORCHING THE SOLES OF MY FEET.
YOU DID THIS TO ME! YOU SENT ME HERE! HOW CAN YOU LEAVE ME IN THIS PLACE?!
HOW COULD YOU LET THIS HAPPEN TO ME?!
...RISING AND FALLING, IN CALM AND IN PASSION.
THIS... THING...
...ITS HEARTBEAT DOESN'T SOUND LIKE KAREN'S.
WAIT A SECOND...
...ITS HEARTBEAT?
NOOOOOOO
RRWIPP

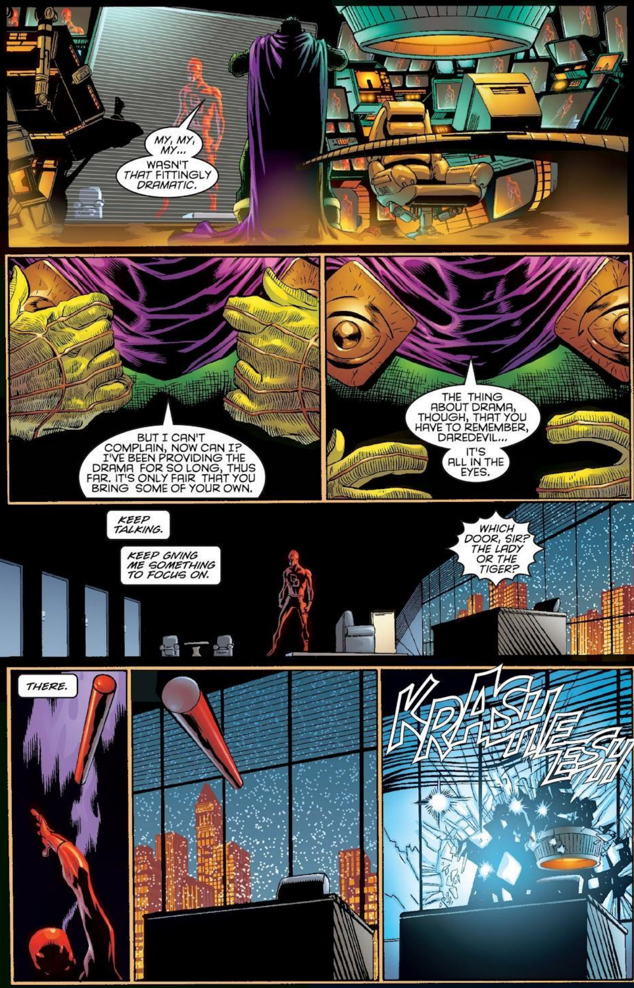

IT SEEMS YOU NEED ME AFTER ALL, LITTLE DEVIL.
BE THANKFUL THE ALMIGHTY MADE ME YOUR GUARDIAN ANGEL.
YOU'RE MY... GUARDIAN ANGEL?
SINCE YOU WERE BORN. I WAS ONLY ABLE TO MANIFEST MYSELF WHEN MACABES MADE HIS MOVE FOR THE CHILD. THEN MY MISSION BECAME TWOFOLD -- PROTECT YOU, AS ALWAYS...
... AND STOP MACABES. COME! WE HAVEN'T MUCH TIME.
FRAPAPP
HOW DID YOU GET IN HERE?
ETHEREAL TECHNOLOGY. I OPENED AN INTER-DIMENSIONAL PORTAL. IT'S HOW WE ANGELS GET FROM PLACE TO PLACE.
IS THE BABY STILL ALIVE?
YES. MACABES CAN'T KILL UNTIL MIDNIGHT, WHEN A DEMON'S POWERS ARE AT THEIR APEX. EVEN NOW, THE BEAST MAKES PREPARATIONS TO END THE SAVIOR'S LIFE, AND BRING ABOUT AN UNHOLY APOCALYPTIC COUP OF HEAVEN!
DOWN!
IF MACABES' WILL IS REALIZED, HE'LL ENSLAVE HUMANITY AND GOD ALIKE. THE FORCES OF THE PIT WILL RISE AGAINST THE LIVING AND THE DEAD, AND FEAST ON THE BONES OF THE JUST!
HIS WORDS WOULD HAVE GREATER IMPACT...
...IF I WASN'T SO PREOCCUPIED WITH WHAT I PULLED OFF THAT THING IN THE ELEVATOR.

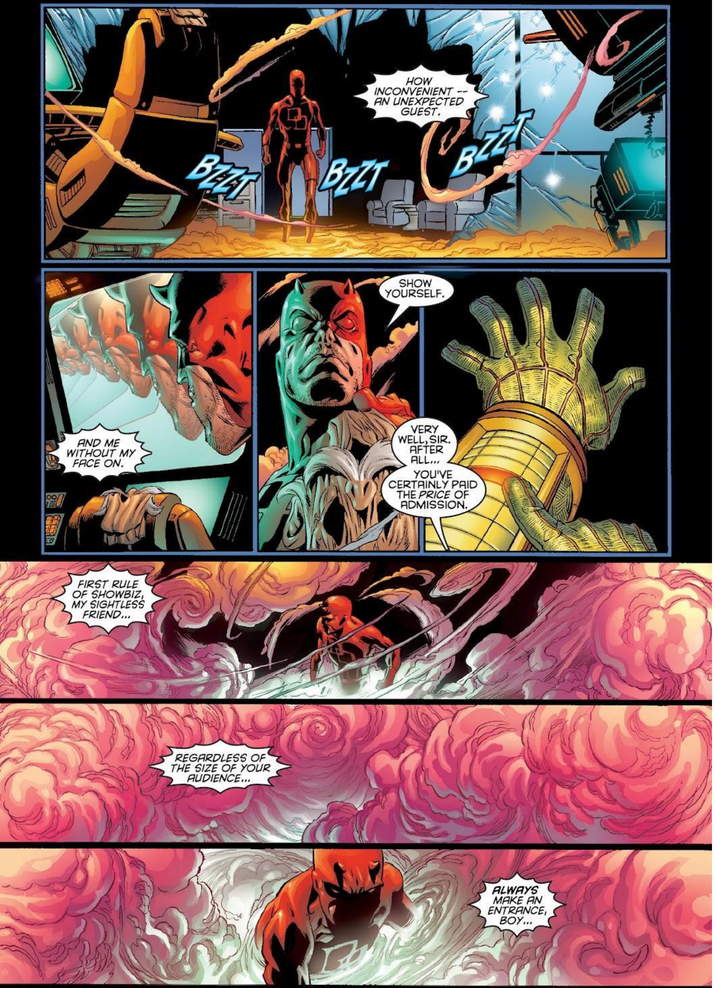

IT'S NOT FLESH.
IT'S A SYNTHETIC.
IT SMELLS LIKE...
...WAIT...
...I'M SUDDENLY PICKING UP THE BUZZ OF A HIGH FREQUENCY TRANSMISSION. IT'S ...
BRATTATTATATTA
WE'VE BEEN SPOTTED! PREPARE FOR THE BATTLE!
OOOF!
URK!
THEY'RE HUMAN! GO FOR THE HEART OR HEAD!
YES.
IT'S ALL STARTING TO GEL.
IN GOD'S NAME, DIE!
HOW COULD I HAVE BEEN SO BLIND?
KRAK
I SEND THEE BACK TO PERDITION!
I PRAY I'M WRONG.
SHUCKT


BUT I KNOW...
SPAP
...I'M CERTAIN...
SPAP
FAP
...I'M RIGHT.
SNAP
COME, BROTHER -- WE MUST...
I FIND THE NERVE CLUSTER IN THE SOLAR PLEXUS OF THIS 'GUARDIAN ANGEL' AND SQUEEZE.
IT'S A MOVE THAT CAN KILL IF TOO MUCH PRESSURE IS APPLIED.
I FIGHT THE URGE TO TWIST A MILLIMETER MORE TO THE RIGHT, AND INSTEAD RELEASE HIM.
THE 'ANGEL' FALLS.


THE 'ANGELIC SHRIEK' IN THE ROOM HE'D IMPRISONED ME IN THREW ME COMPLETELY OFF BALANCE THE FIRST TIME I FOUGHT THIS GUY.
COUPLE THAT WITH THE DRUG I'D INGESTED FROM MACABE'S CROSS'S CALLING CARD...
...AND IT'S EASY TO SEE WHY I DIDN'T PICK UP ON THE FACT...
...THAT I WAS FIGHTING ANOTHER COSTUME.
BZZT
BZZT
SCORE ONE FOR YOU, VIGILANTE.
BUT THE NIGHT...
...OH, THE NIGHT IS STILL YOUNG.
MY LIFE UPHEAVED. MY MOTHER BEATEN.
THE WOMAN I LOVED, KILLED.
AND FOR WHAT?
SO SOME LUNATIC COULD PLAY DRESS-UP?
YOU BETTER PRAY, WHOEVER YOU ARE...

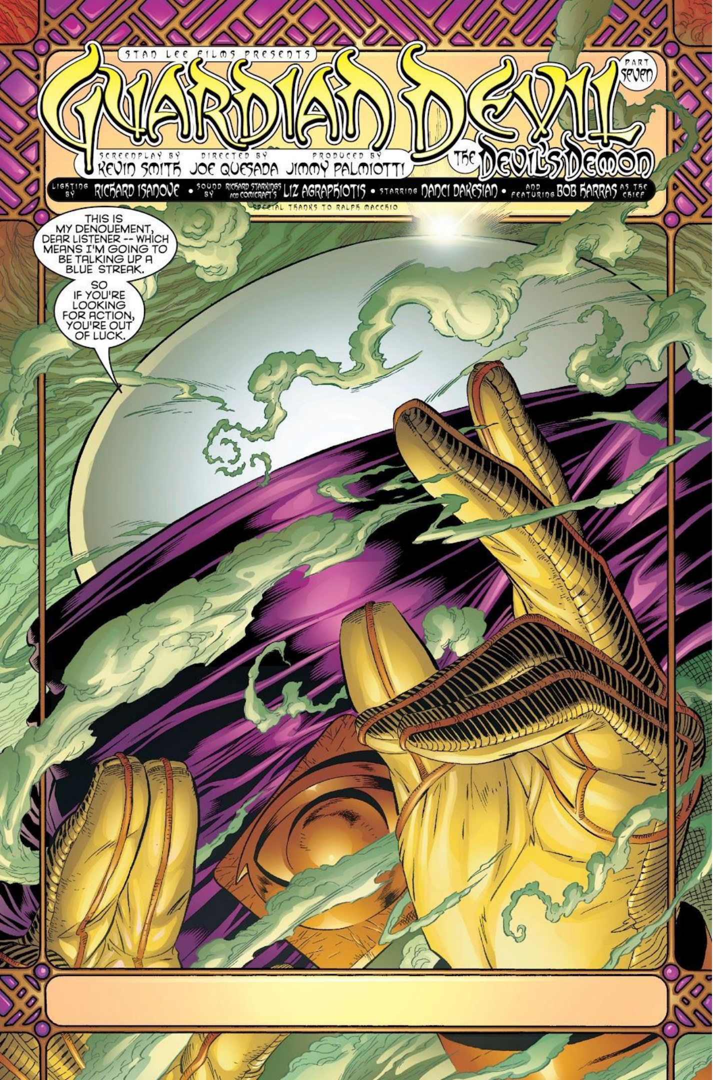

YOU BETTER PRAY THAT BABY'S STILL ALIVE.
PRAYING'S NOT MY STYLE, SIR. I LEAVE THAT TO THE UNENLIGHTENED. SUCH AS YOURSELF.
I'M OF THE CHURCH OF SMOKE AND MIRRORS, DEVIL.
MY KNEE BENDS ONLY TO THE GODS OF SLEIGHT-OF-HAND.
I HEAR HIS HEARTBEAT.
IT'S RACING LIKE AN ANXIOUS CHILD.
HE'S EXCITED. WHOEVER HE IS.
EAGER.
BUT THE BREATHING...
...IT'S LABORED.
FWAMM
IT'S ABOUT TO GET MORE SO.


MY, MY, MY... WASN'T THAT FITTINGLY DRAMATIC.
BUT I CAN'T COMPLAIN, NOW CAN I? I'VE BEEN PROVIDING THE DRAMA FOR SO LONG, THUS FAR. IT'S ONLY FAIR THAT YOU BRING SOME OF YOUR OWN.
THE THING ABOUT DRAMA, THOUGH, THAT YOU HAVE TO REMEMBER, DAREDEVIL...
IT'S ALL IN THE EYES.
KEEP TALKING.
KEEP GIVING ME SOMETHING TO FOCUS ON.
WHICH DOOR, SIR? THE LADY OR THE TIGER?
THERE.


HOW INCONVENIENT -- AN UNEXPECTED GUEST.
BZZZT
BZZZT
BZZZT
AND ME WITHOUT MY FACE ON.
SHOW YOURSELF.
VERY WELL, SIR. AFTER ALL...
YOU'VE CERTAINLY PAID THE PRICE OF ADMISSION.
FIRST RULE OF SHOWBIZ, MY SIGHTLESS FRIEND...
REGARDLESS OF THE SIZE OF YOUR AUDIENCE...
ALWAYS MAKE AN ENTRANCE, BOY...

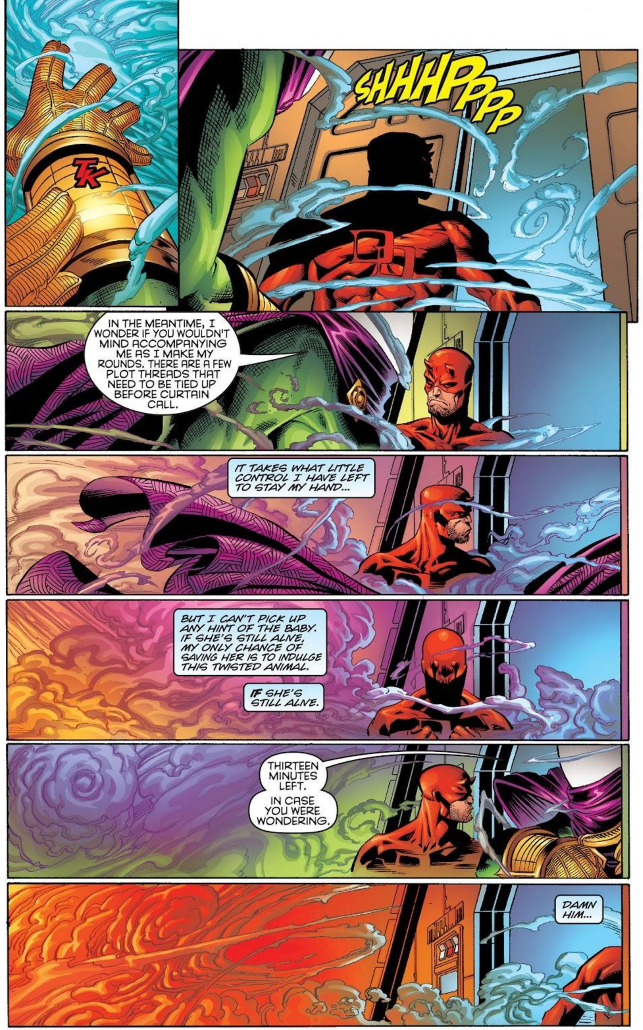

ALWAYS MAKE AN ENTRANCE!


MARVEL
D D
KNIGHTS
MAR
#7
WWW.MARVEL.COM
SMITH
QUESADA
PALMIOTTI
HERE COMES...
DAREDEVIL
THE MAN WITHOUT FEAR!

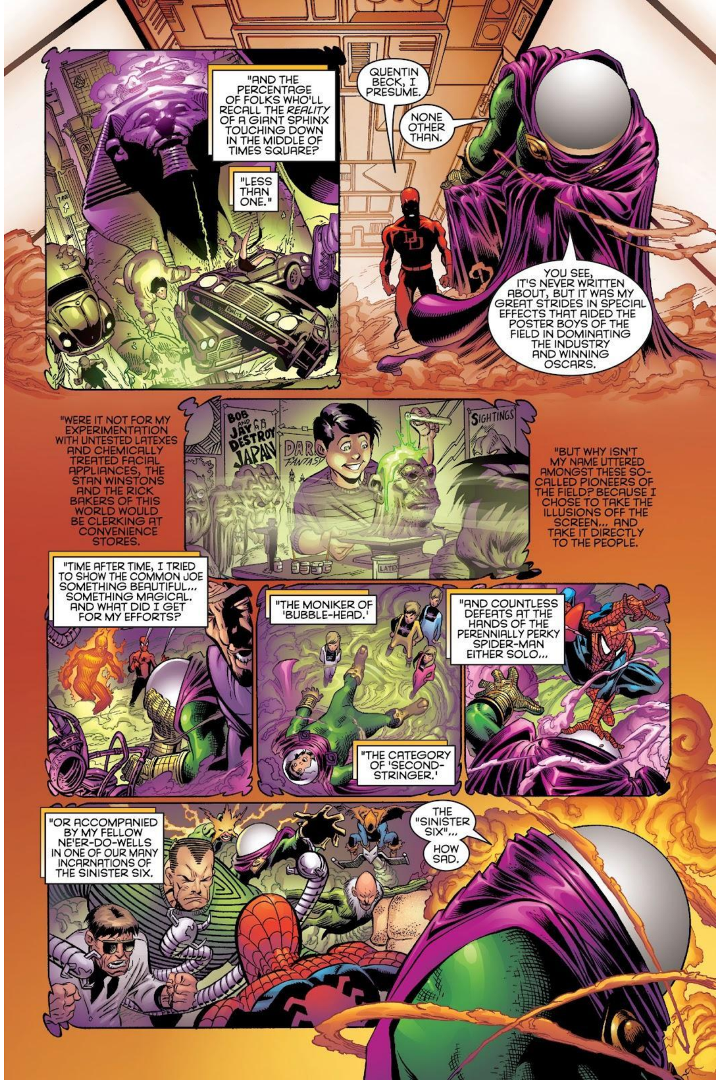

STAN LEE FILMS PRESENTS
GUARDIAN DEVIL
PART SEVEN
THE DEVIL'S DEMON
SCREENPLAY BY KEVIN SMITH
DIRECTED BY JOE QUESADA
PRODUCED BY JIMMY PALMIOTTI
LIGHTING BY RICHARD ISANOVE • SOUND BY RICHARD STARKINGS AND COMICRAFT'S LIZ AGRAPHIOTIS • STARRING NANCI DAKESIAN • AND FEATURING BOB HARRAS AS THE CHIEF
SPECIAL THANKS TO RALPH MACCHIO
THIS IS MY DENOUEMENT, DEAR LISTENER -- WHICH MEANS I'M GOING TO BE TALKING UP A BLUE STREAK.
SO IF YOU'RE LOOKING FOR ACTION, YOU'RE OUT OF LUCK.

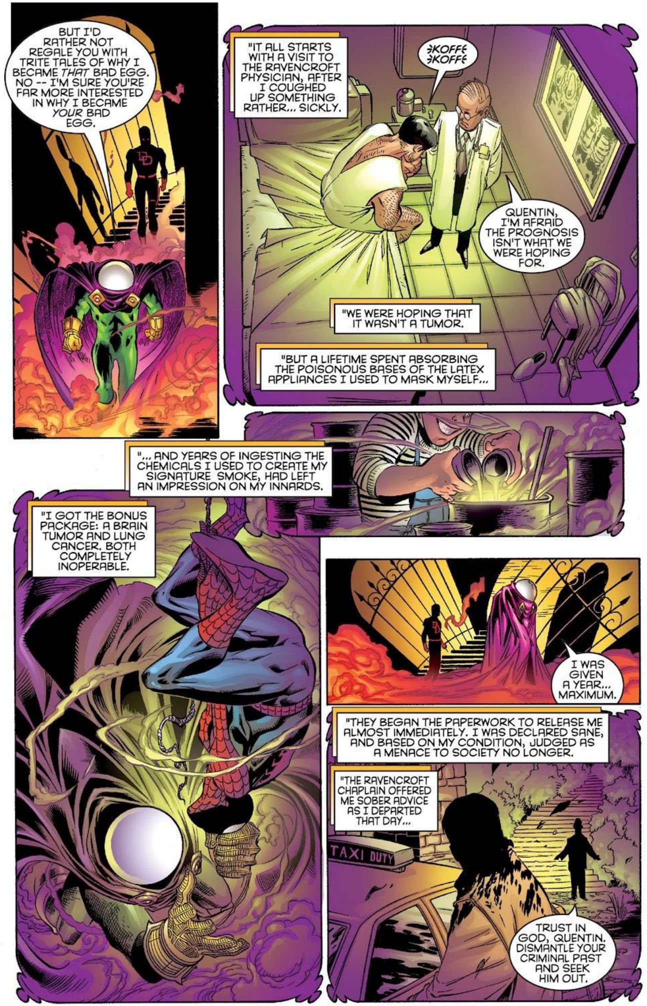

COULDN'T CARE LESS WHAT YOU HAVE TO SAY...
OH SHOOT...
POOMP
I'M ONLY INTERESTED...
DOOP
OOF!
... IN ENDING YOU.
FZP
D... DON'T FOR... FORGET...
DON'T FORGET THE CHILD...
DAMN HIM...
IF YOU WANT TO STAY ALIVE, YOU'LL TELL ME WHERE THE BABY IS.
CAN'T TELL YOU THAT JUST YET, DEVIL.
HOWEVER, I WILL TAKE THIS OPPORTUNITY TO INFORM YOU THAT THIS SUIT IS WIRED TO ENHANCE MY STRENGTH.


SMAK
UUH!
NOW -- YOU WERE INQUIRING ABOUT THE CHILD'S WELFARE.
THE CHILD HAS BEEN SECURED IN A SOUNDPROOF, VACUUM CHAMBER, SOMEWHERE WITHIN THE BUILDING.
THE UPSHOT IS THAT EVEN YOUR HEIGHTENED SENSES WILL NOT BE ABLE TO DETECT HER.
THE DOWNSHOT IS SIMPLE PHYSICS, REALLY.
YOU SEE, IN ORDER TO CONSTRUCT THE SOUNDPROOF CHAMBER, WE NEEDED TO CREATE THE VACUUM. AND IN ORDER TO CREATE THE VACUUM, WE NEEDED TO ELIMINATE AIR -- IN THIS CASE, OXYGEN.
FROM THE MOMENT YOU SMASHED INTO MY SANCTUM, THE CHILD HAD TWENTY MINUTES TO LIVE.
YOU WASTED FIVE BEATING ON ME.
WASTE ANY MORE OF MY TIME, AND YOU SIGN THE INFANT'S DEATH WARRANT.
WISE CHOICE, HERO. MAINTAIN THAT JUDICIOUS DECISIVENESS, AND I VOW -- I SHALL SPARE THE CHILD'S LIFE.

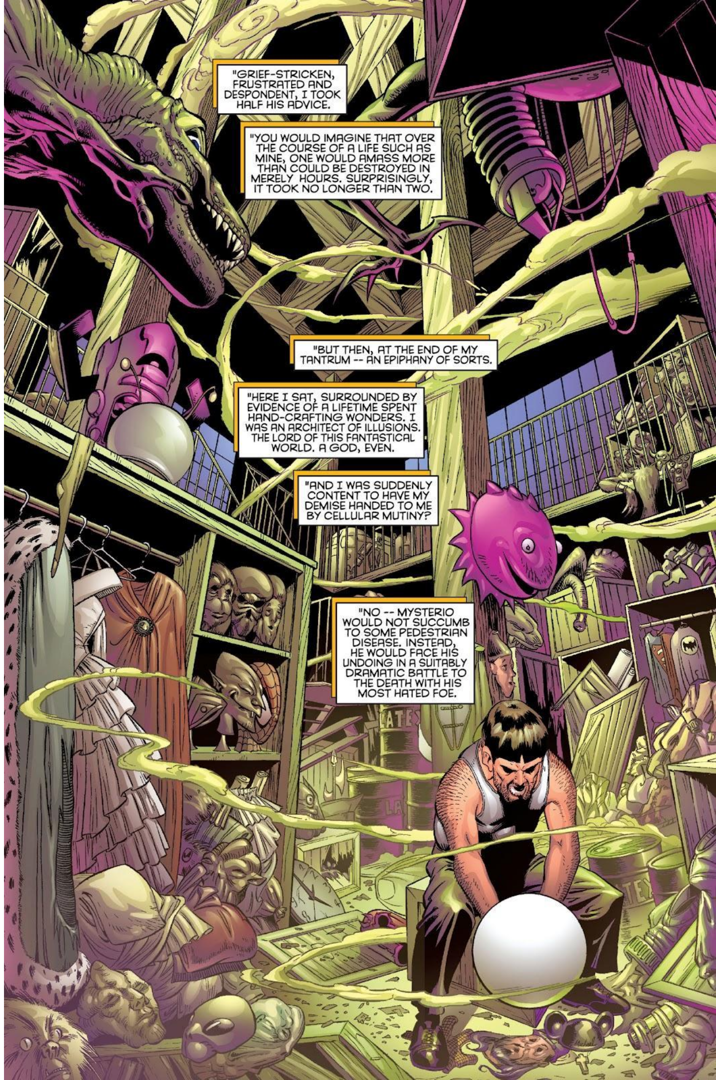

SHHHPPPP
IN THE MEANTIME, I WONDER IF YOU WOULDN'T MIND ACCOMPANYING ME AS I MAKE MY ROUNDS. THERE ARE A FEW PLOT THREADS THAT NEED TO BE TIED UP BEFORE CURTAIN CALL.
IT TAKES WHAT LITTLE CONTROL I HAVE LEFT TO STAY MY HAND...
BUT I CAN'T PICK UP ANY HINT OF THE BABY. IF SHE'S STILL ALIVE, MY ONLY CHANCE OF SAVING HER IS TO INDULGE THIS TWISTED ANIMAL.
IF SHE'S STILL ALIVE.
THIRTEEN MINUTES LEFT.
IN CASE YOU WERE WONDERING.
DAMN HIM...


I SUPPOSE IT'D BE TOO PRESUMPTUOUS TO ASSUME YOU KNOW MUCH ABOUT ME -- BEYOND YOUR MOST RECENT DISCOVERIES, OF COURSE.
NO -- NO ONE'S EVER GIVEN ME MUCH THOUGHT, I'D WAGER. WHEN ALL'S SAID AND DONE, I'M NOTHING MORE THAN THE GUY WITH THE FISH BOWL HEAD.
TYPICAL.
WELL, THEN LET'S TEST YOUR FILMIC ACUMEN, SHALL WE?
YOU'VE HEARD OF SPIELBERG? LUCAS? CAMERON?
HOW ABOUT QUENTIN BECK?
NO -- I THOUGHT NOT.
THE OTHERS -- WELL, THEY'VE TINKERED WITH PEDESTRIAN, TWO-DIMENSIONAL IMAGERY IN THE PICTURES, OF COURSE. ALL WITH GREAT SUCCESS. BUT QUENTIN BECK...
HE'S CRAFTED THREE-DIMENSIONAL ILLUSIONS SO INCREDIBLE AND INTIMIDATING, THEY'VE MANAGED TO PROVIDE THEIR CREATOR WITH MORE WEALTH THAN ALL THE GROSSES OF THE AFORE-MENTIONED GENTLEMEN'S FILMIC ENDEAVORS COMBINED.
BUT I'LL BET YOU EVERY PENNY OF THAT ACCUMULATED FORTUNE THAT IF YOU POLLED A HUNDRED PEOPLE IN THE GREATER METROPOLITAN AREA -- NOT TO MENTION THE WORLD -- AT LEAST NINETY PERCENT OF THEM WILL NEVER FORGET THE IMAGES OF...
... A CHEAP, RUBBER SHARK JUMPING ON A BOAT...
... A GLORIFIED FLASHLIGHT CUTTING AN OLD MAN IN A BATHROBE DOWN...
... OR A RICKETY ROBOT FIRING A SEMI-AUTOMATIC.


"AND THE PERCENTAGE OF FOLKS WHO'LL RECALL THE *REALITY* OF A GIANT SPHINX TOUCHING DOWN IN THE MIDDLE OF TIMES SQUARE?
"LESS THAN ONE."
QUENTIN BECK, I PRESUME.
NONE OTHER THAN.
YOU SEE, IT'S NEVER WRITTEN ABOUT, BUT IT WAS MY GREAT STRIDES IN SPECIAL EFFECTS THAT AIDED THE POSTER BOYS OF THE FIELD IN DOMINATING THE INDUSTRY AND WINNING OSCARS.
"WERE IT NOT FOR MY EXPERIMENTATION WITH UNTESTED LATEXES AND CHEMICALLY TREATED FACIAL APPLIANCES, THE STAN WINSTONS AND THE RICK BAKERS OF THIS WORLD WOULD BE CLERKING AT CONVENIENCE STORES.
BOB AND JAY GO DESTROY JAPAN
SIGHTINGS
"BUT WHY ISN'T MY NAME UTTERED AMONGST THESE SO-CALLED PIONEERS OF THE FIELD? BECAUSE I CHOSE TO TAKE THE ILLUSIONS OFF THE SCREEN... AND TAKE IT DIRECTLY TO THE PEOPLE.
"TIME AFTER TIME, I TRIED TO SHOW THE COMMON JOE SOMETHING BEAUTIFUL... SOMETHING MAGICAL. AND WHAT DID I GET FOR MY EFFORTS?
"THE MONIKER OF 'BUBBLE-HEAD.'
"THE CATEGORY OF 'SECOND-STRINGER.'
"AND COUNTLESS DEFEATS AT THE HANDS OF THE PERENNIALLY PERKY SPIDER-MAN EITHER SOLO...
"OR ACCOMPANIED BY MY FELLOW NE'ER-DO-WELLS IN ONE OF OUR MANY INCARNATIONS OF THE SINISTER SIX.
THE "SINISTER SIX"... HOW SAD.

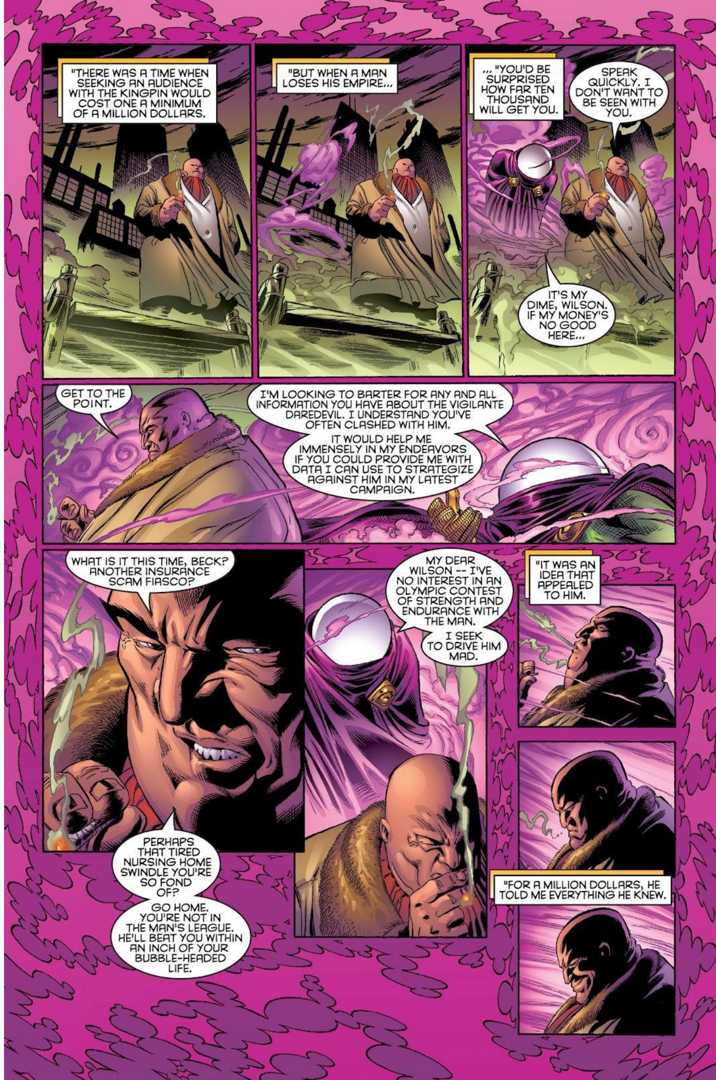


BUT I'D RATHER NOT REGALE YOU WITH TRITE TALES OF WHY I BECAME *THAT* BAD EGG. NO -- I'M SURE YOU'RE FAR MORE INTERESTED IN WHY I BECAME *YOUR* BAD EGG.
"IT ALL STARTS WITH A VISIT TO THE RAVENCROFT PHYSICIAN, AFTER I COUGHED UP SOMETHING RATHER... SICKLY.
KOFF KOFF
QUENTIN, I'M AFRAID THE PROGNOSIS ISN'T WHAT WE WERE HOPING FOR.
"WE WERE HOPING THAT IT WASN'T A TUMOR.
"BUT A LIFETIME SPENT ABSORBING THE POISONOUS BASES OF THE LATEX APPLIANCES I USED TO MASK MYSELF...
"... AND YEARS OF INGESTING THE CHEMICALS I USED TO CREATE MY SIGNATURE SMOKE, HAD LEFT AN IMPRESSION ON MY INNARDS.
"I GOT THE BONUS PACKAGE: A BRAIN TUMOR AND LUNG CANCER. BOTH COMPLETELY INOPERABLE.
I WAS GIVEN A YEAR... MAXIMUM.
"THEY BEGAN THE PAPERWORK TO RELEASE ME ALMOST IMMEDIATELY. I WAS DECLARED SANE, AND BASED ON MY CONDITION, JUDGED AS A MENACE TO SOCIETY NO LONGER.
"THE RAVENCROFT CHAPLAIN OFFERED ME SOBER ADVICE AS I DEPARTED THAT DAY...
TAXI DUTY
TRUST IN GOD, QUENTIN. DISMANTLE YOUR CRIMINAL PAST AND SEEK HIM OUT.

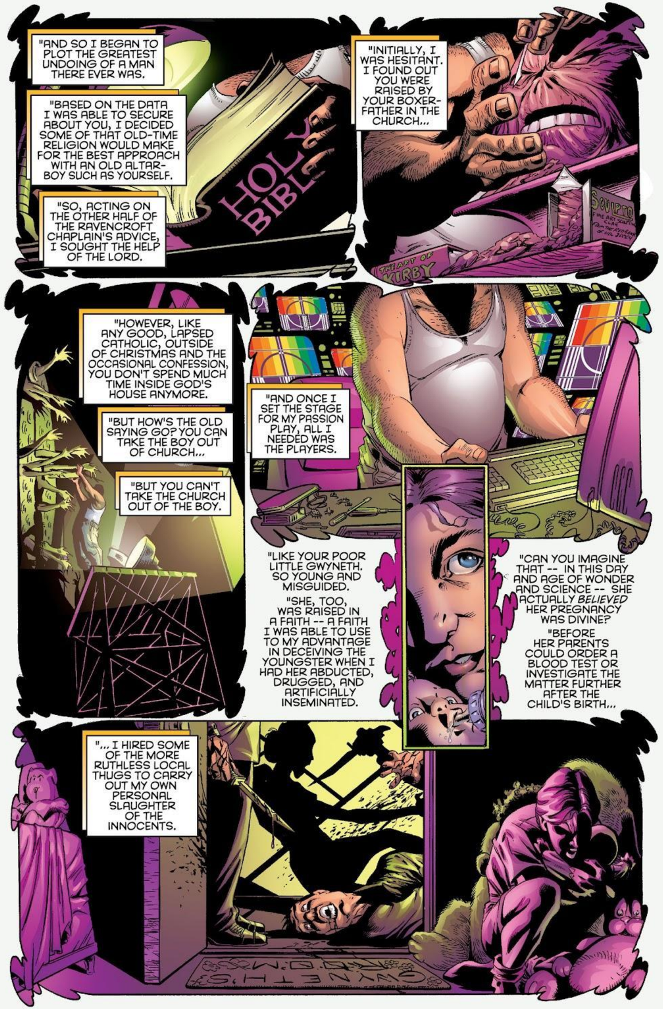


"GRIEF-STRICKEN, FRUSTRATED AND DESPONDENT, I TOOK HALF HIS ADVICE.
"YOU WOULD IMAGINE THAT OVER THE COURSE OF A LIFE SUCH AS MINE, ONE WOULD AMASS MORE THAN COULD BE DESTROYED IN MERELY HOURS. SURPRISINGLY, IT TOOK NO LONGER THAN TWO.
"BUT THEN, AT THE END OF MY TANTRUM -- AN EPIPHANY OF SORTS.
"HERE I SAT, SURROUNDED BY EVIDENCE OF A LIFETIME SPENT HAND-CRAFTING WONDERS. I WAS AN ARCHITECT OF ILLUSIONS. THE LORD OF THIS FANTASTICAL WORLD. A GOD, EVEN.
"AND I WAS SUDDENLY CONTENT TO HAVE MY DEMISE HANDED TO ME BY CELLULAR MUTINY?
"NO -- MYSTERIO WOULD NOT SUCCUMB TO SOME PEDESTRIAN DISEASE. INSTEAD, HE WOULD FACE HIS UNDOING IN A SUITABLY DRAMATIC BATTLE TO THE DEATH WITH HIS MOST HATED FOE.


"BUT ALAS -- IN MY ABSENCE, THE WORLD HAD COME TO KNOW AN ARACHNID I WAS NOT FAMILIAR WITH.
BUGLE
SPIDER-MAN?!?
"BASED ON ALL I'D BEEN READING IN THE BUGLE, THIS WAS NOT *MY* SPIDER-MAN. AND HOW POETIC COULD IT POSSIBLY BE TO TAKE FINAL ARMS AGAINST SOME KIND OF... FOR LACK OF A BETTER DESCRIPTION...
... "CLONE?"
MY GRAND FANTASY OF A SWAN SONG SEEMED LIKE A PIPE-DREAM.
UNTIL I REMEMBERED YOU.
"WE'D CLASHED ONCE, AFTER THE AVENGERS WERE THOUGHT DEAD, AND THE BIG APPLE SEEMED RIPE FOR THE PLUCKING. YOU SAW TO IT THAT MY INSURANCE SCHEME MET WITH A QUICK AND UNPROFITABLE END."
I WAS SURPRISED AND IMPRESSED BY YOUR SKILLS, IN RETROSPECT. BUT THEN THERE WAS SOMETHING *MORE* ABOUT YOU THAT APPEALED TO ME.
YOU WEREN'T REGARDED MUCH OUTSIDE OF HELL'S KITCHEN. UNLIKE SPIDER-MAN, YOURS WAS NOT A REPUTATION THAT WAS KNOWN THE WORLD OVER.
I LIKED THAT.
YOU WERE LIKE ME.
A SECOND STRINGER.
AND SO I SET ABOUT INVESTIGATING THE MAN BEHIND THE MASK.


"THERE WAS A TIME WHEN SEEKING AN AUDIENCE WITH THE KINGPIN WOULD COST ONE A MINIMUM OF A MILLION DOLLARS.
"BUT WHEN A MAN LOSES HIS EMPIRE...
... "YOU'D BE SURPRISED HOW FAR TEN THOUSAND WILL GET YOU.
SPEAK QUICKLY. I DON'T WANT TO BE SEEN WITH YOU.
IT'S MY DIME, WILSON. IF MY MONEY'S NO GOOD HERE...
GET TO THE POINT.
I'M LOOKING TO BARTER FOR ANY AND ALL INFORMATION YOU HAVE ABOUT THE VIGILANTE DAREDEVIL. I UNDERSTAND YOU'VE OFTEN CLASHED WITH HIM.
IT WOULD HELP ME IMMENSELY IN MY ENDEAVORS IF YOU COULD PROVIDE ME WITH DATA I CAN USE TO STRATEGIZE AGAINST HIM IN MY LATEST CAMPAIGN.
WHAT IS IT THIS TIME, BECK? ANOTHER INSURANCE SCAM FIASCO?
PERHAPS THAT TIRED NURSING HOME SWINDLE YOU'RE SO FOND OF?
GO HOME. YOU'RE NOT IN THE MAN'S LEAGUE. HE'LL BEAT YOU WITHIN AN INCH OF YOUR BUBBLE-HEADED LIFE.
MY DEAR WILSON -- I'VE NO INTEREST IN AN OLYMPIC CONTEST OF STRENGTH AND ENDURANCE WITH THE MAN.
I SEEK TO DRIVE HIM MAD.
"IT WAS AN IDEA THAT APPEALED TO HIM.
"FOR A MILLION DOLLARS, HE TOLD ME EVERYTHING HE KNEW.


EVERYTHING.

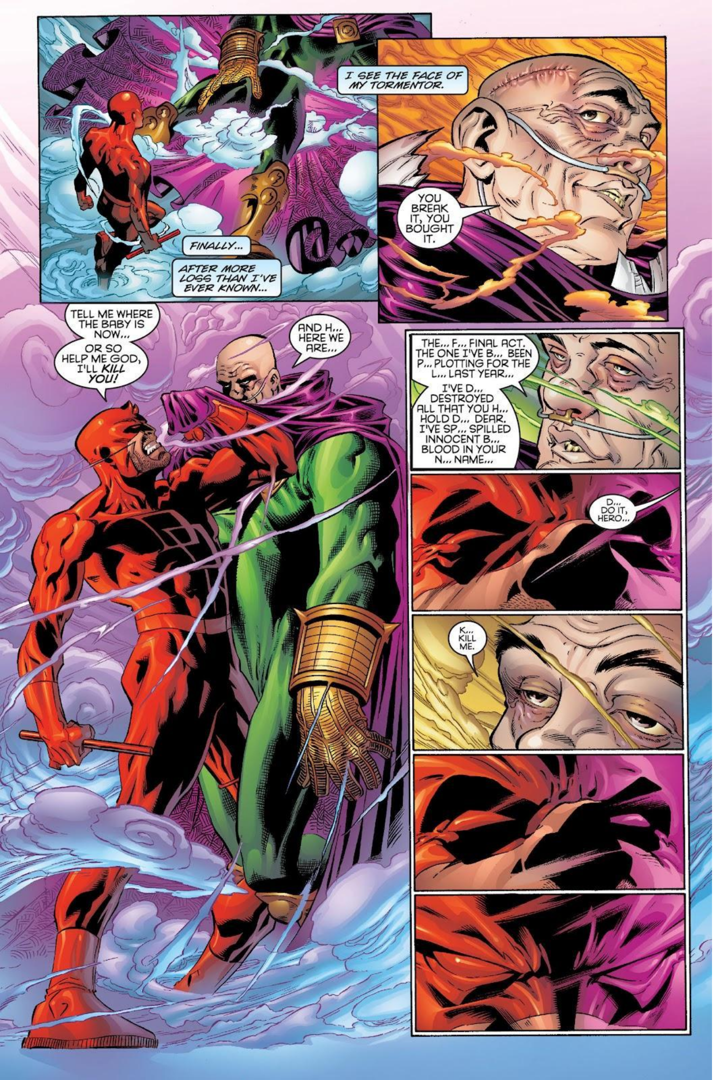

"AND SO I BEGAN TO PLOT THE GREATEST UNDOING OF A MAN THERE EVER WAS.
"BASED ON THE DATA I WAS ABLE TO SECURE ABOUT YOU, I DECIDED SOME OF THAT OLD-TIME RELIGION WOULD MAKE FOR THE BEST APPROACH WITH AN OLD ALTAR-BOY SUCH AS YOURSELF.
"SO, ACTING ON THE OTHER HALF OF THE RAVENCROFT CHAPLAIN'S ADVICE, I SOUGHT THE HELP OF THE LORD.
HOLY BIBLE
"INITIALLY, I WAS HESITANT. I FOUND OUT YOU WERE RAISED BY YOUR BOXER-FATHER IN THE CHURCH...
KIRBY
"HOWEVER, LIKE ANY GOOD, LAPSED CATHOLIC, OUTSIDE OF CHRISTMAS AND THE OCCASIONAL CONFESSION, YOU DON'T SPEND MUCH TIME INSIDE GOD'S HOUSE ANYMORE.
"BUT HOW'S THE OLD SAYING GO? YOU CAN TAKE THE BOY OUT OF CHURCH...
"BUT YOU CAN'T TAKE THE CHURCH OUT OF THE BOY.
"AND ONCE I SET THE STAGE FOR MY PASSION PLAY, ALL I NEEDED WAS THE PLAYERS.
"LIKE YOUR POOR LITTLE GWYNETH. SO YOUNG AND MISGUIDED.
"SHE, TOO, WAS RAISED IN A FAITH -- A FAITH I WAS ABLE TO USE TO MY ADVANTAGE IN DECEIVING THE YOUNGSTER WHEN I HAD HER ABDUCTED, DRUGGED, AND ARTIFICIALLY INSEMINATED.
"CAN YOU IMAGINE THAT -- IN THIS DAY AND AGE OF WONDER AND SCIENCE -- SHE ACTUALLY *BELIEVED* HER PREGNANCY WAS DIVINE?
"BEFORE HER PARENTS COULD ORDER A BLOOD TEST OR INVESTIGATE THE MATTER FURTHER AFTER THE CHILD'S BIRTH...
"... I HIRED SOME OF THE MORE RUTHLESS LOCAL THUGS TO CARRY OUT MY OWN PERSONAL SLAUGHTER OF THE INNOCENTS.


"FEEDING THEIR DAUGHTER HALLUCINOGENIC IMAGERY THAT POINTED HER IN YOUR DIRECTION SEALED YOUR FATE THAT DAY, MISTER MURDOCK.
"WHILE HER FATE WAS SEALED WHEN I HAD NO FURTHER USE FOR HER CHARACTER.
"THEN THERE WAS LYDIA McKENZIE -- THE WOULD-BE ACTRESS WITH AN INSATIABLE DRUG HABIT.
"SEEMS YOU CAN'T GET AWAY FROM *THAT* TYPE, EH, DEVIL?
"A FIX OR TWO A DAY, AND SHE'D TELL YOUR ASSOCIATE, FRANKLIN NELSON, ANYTHING I NEEDED THAT SOLD HER AS A WOULD-BE, HIGH SOCIETY DIVORCÉE.
"IT WAS NO GREAT TASK SLIPPING NELSON A MICKEY THAT'D INSURE HE SAW A SIDE OF LYDIA THAT DIDN'T QUITE EXIST...
"AND A LITTLE BAD HORSE SAW TO IT THAT LYDIA *HERSELF* CEASED TO EXIST.
"CEASING TO EXIST WAS SOMETHING THE GREAT JONATHAN CURTAIN -- THE MAN WHOSE FACE AND FORTUNE I CO-OPTED -- CARRIED OUT AS MASTERFULLY AS THE WORK HE BUILT HIS CAREER ON.
"IT WAS THRILLING TO MEET A MAN WHOSE WORK I'D SO ADMIRED FOR DECADES, AND EVEN MORE THRILLING TO SEND HIM TO HIS GREAT REWARD... SO THAT I MIGHT CLAIM MINE. HE'D INVESTED HIS EARNINGS WISELY, SO HE LEFT BEHIND A RATHER SIZABLE ESTATE WHICH I WAS ABLE TO ACCESS IN HIS STEAD.


IT WASN'T NECESSARY TO DISGUISE MYSELF FOR YOUR BENEFIT, I REALIZED. BUT I COULDN'T RISK THE CHANCE THAT SOMEONE WITH FUNCTIONING PEEPERS MIGHT RECOGNIZE QUENTIN BECK AND SPOIL MY GREAT AND SECRET SHOW. THE FACE OF A HARMLESS OLD MAN SEEMED ABOUT AS GOOD A MASK AS ANY, AND THE LEAST I COULD DO WAS HONOR CURTAIN BY WEARING HIS. I HAD, AFTER ALL, KILLED THE MAN.
HIM AND SO MANY OTHERS.
BUT NOT THE CHILDREN IN THE CITY HOSPITALS. AS MUCH AS I'D LIKE TO CLAIM CREDIT FOR THAT BIBLICAL FLOURISH, I MUST CONFESS I HAD NOTHING TO DO WITH IT. YOU CAN BE SURE, THOUGH, THAT ONCE I CAUGHT WIND OF THE SHOCKING TRAGEDY, I WASTED NO TIME WORKING IT INTO MY LITTLE SCENARIO.
IT WAS A SERENDIPITOUS HAPPENSTANCE -- ONE THAT MUST HAVE THE GUILTY PARTY TWISTING IN SWEATY, INSOMNIA-PLAGUED SHEETS, NO DOUBT.
DAILY BUGLE
NEW YORK'S FINEST DAILY NEWSPAPER
HOSPITA TRAGEDY
HELPING SEND YOUR FORMER LADY-LOVE TO THE GRAVE, HOWEVER, HAS BEEN NOTHING I'VE LOST SLEEP OVER.
IT'S AMAZING, ISN'T IT? A LIFETIME FULL OF QUESTIONABLE MORAL BEHAVIOR DID MORE TO CONVINCE HER THAT SHE WAS RIDDLED WITH DISEASE THAN ME IN MY RENTED DOCTOR SUIT.
MAYBE SHE WAS *HIV-POSITIVE*, MAYBE SHE WASN'T. YOU'D THINK SHE'D AT LEAST GET A SECOND OPINION.
"DIDN'T REALLY MATTER IN THE END, DID IT? THAT MANIAC I SENT IN TO TOY WITH YOU FURTHER SAW TO IT THAT THE NEXT DOCTOR SHE'D SEE...
"... WAS THE CORONER.


THEY ALL PLAYED THEIR PARTS WONDERFULLY, MY LITTLE THESPIANS.
THROW IN A FEW SPOOKY STORIES, SOME MAKEUP, AND A HALLUCINOGEN OR TWO...
...AND YOU'VE GOT THE GROTESQUE MORALITY PLAY THAT HAS BEEN YOUR LIFE FOR THE PAST FEW WEEKS.
EXCUSE ME.
HOW ARE YOU FEELING, MISTER GABRIEL? IT SEEMS OUR FRIEND DEALT YOU QUITE THE BLOW DURING YOUR BATTLE, DIDN'T HE?
GOTTA... GOTTA GET TO THE HOSPITAL...
REST ASSURED, HELP IS ON THE WAY, MISTER GABRIEL.
Ah --
-- HERE IT IS NOW.
BRATAT
BRRATATATATATA
NO!
THIS ISN'T AN AUDIENCE-PARTICIPATION PIECE, DAREDEVIL. I'D ADVISE YOU TO REMEMBER THE WELFARE OF THE CHILD.


BESIDES -- THESE MEN KNEW YOUR IDENTITY BEHIND THE MASK.
CAN'T HAVE YOUR FOES RUNNING AROUND ON THE STREETS KNOWING ALL YOUR SECRETS, NOW CAN WE?
THAT'S IT...
YOU WANNA KNOW ABOUT SECRETS?
WHILE YOU'VE BEEN RAMBLING ABOUT HOW CLEVER YOU ARE, I'VE BEEN LISTENING FOR THE HUM.
HUM? WHAT HUM?
THE HUM OF THE BATTERY THAT POWERS YOUR SUIT'S CIRCUITRY.
SHKLICK
AHHH!
KARASHH


FINALLY...
AFTER MORE LOSS THAN I'VE EVER KNOWN...
I SEE THE FACE OF MY TORMENTOR.
YOU BREAK IT, YOU BOUGHT IT.
TELL ME WHERE THE BABY IS NOW... OR SO HELP ME GOD, I'LL KILL YOU!
AND H... HERE WE ARE...
THE... F... FINAL ACT. THE ONE I'VE B... BEEN P... PLOTTING FOR THE L... LAST YEAR...
I'VE D... DESTROYED ALL THAT YOU H... HOLD D... DEAR. I'VE SP... SPILLED INNOCENT B... BLOOD IN YOUR N... NAME...
D... DO IT, HERO...
K... KILL ME.


UNG!
I'M NOT GOING TO GIVE YOU THE SATISFACTION.
YOU THINK YOU CAN BREAK ME? YOU'RE A JOKE AND A FRAUD.
NOW GIVE ME THE BABY, AND LET'S END THIS.
A... FRAUD?! I'M... AN ARTIST! I N... NEARLY DROVE YOU... INSANE!
YOU DRUGGED ME AND KILLED PEOPLE. THERE'S NO TALENT IN THAT...
JUST SAVAGERY.
B... BUT... MY DYSTOPIAN NIGHTMARE...
...WAS NOTHING MORE THAN B-MOVIE MATERIAL. AN AMALGAM OF WHORISH, CLICHED DEVICES.



"THE SUPERNATURAL INTRUDING ON OUR WORLD?
"DIDN'T YOU USE THE SAME SHTICK ON J. JONAH JAMESON YEARS AGO?
"AND TRYING TO DRIVE ME INSANE? KINGPIN NEARLY DID IT ONCE.
"BUT YOU'RE NO KINGPIN.
"YOU'RE NOT EVEN CLOSE."
YOU THINK YOU'VE SPUN SOME SORT OF GRAND SWAN-SONG EPIC? THINK AGAIN.
YOU'VE JUST TOLD YET ANOTHER TALE OF A SO-CALLED SUPER-GENIUS ENDEAVORING TO DRIVE HIS ARCH-NEMESIS...
...OR, IN THIS CASE, HIS ADOPTED ARCH-NEMESIS...
INSANE.
YOUR WHOLE EXISTENCE IS COUNTERFEIT. YOU'VE NEVER HAD AN ORIGINAL THOUGHT IN YOUR LIFE. YOU'RE A PRODUCT OF TOO MANY MOVIES AND TOO MUCH T.V. -- REGURGITATING ONLY WHAT'S GONE BEFORE.
YOU'RE A HUMAN XEROX, AT BEST.
I COULD'VE KILLED HIM.
BUT WITH ONLY A FEW, CAREFULLY CHOSEN WORDS...
I'VE TAKEN HIS LIFE.
I WATCH AS A MAN DIES BEFORE ME.
WHERE'S THE BABY?

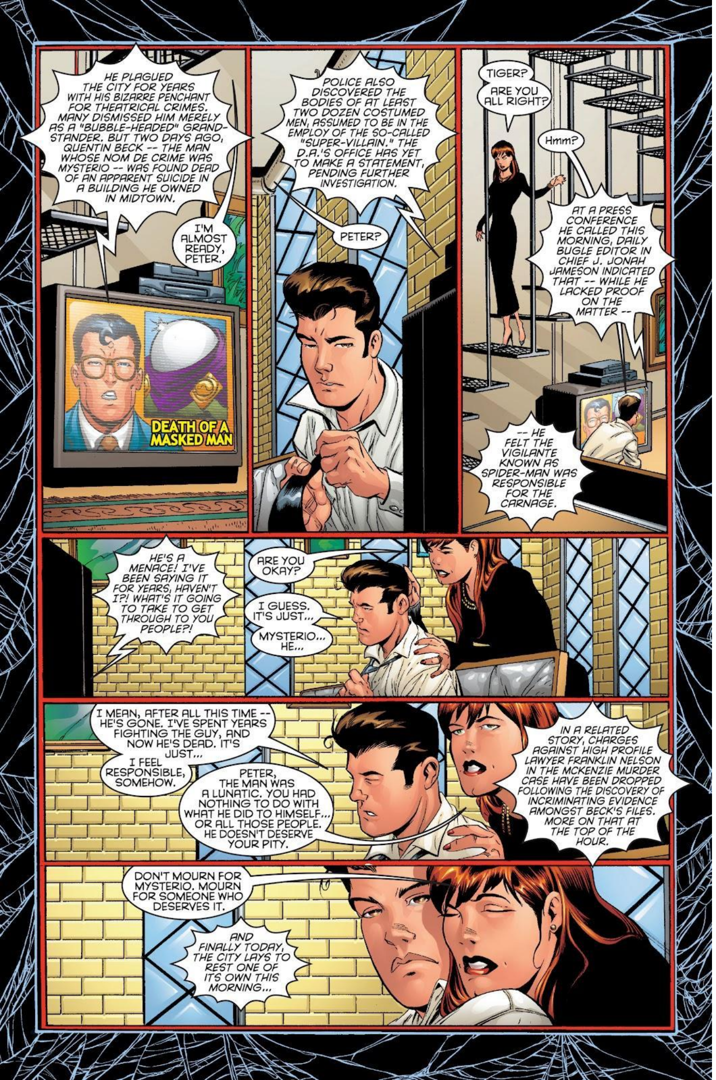


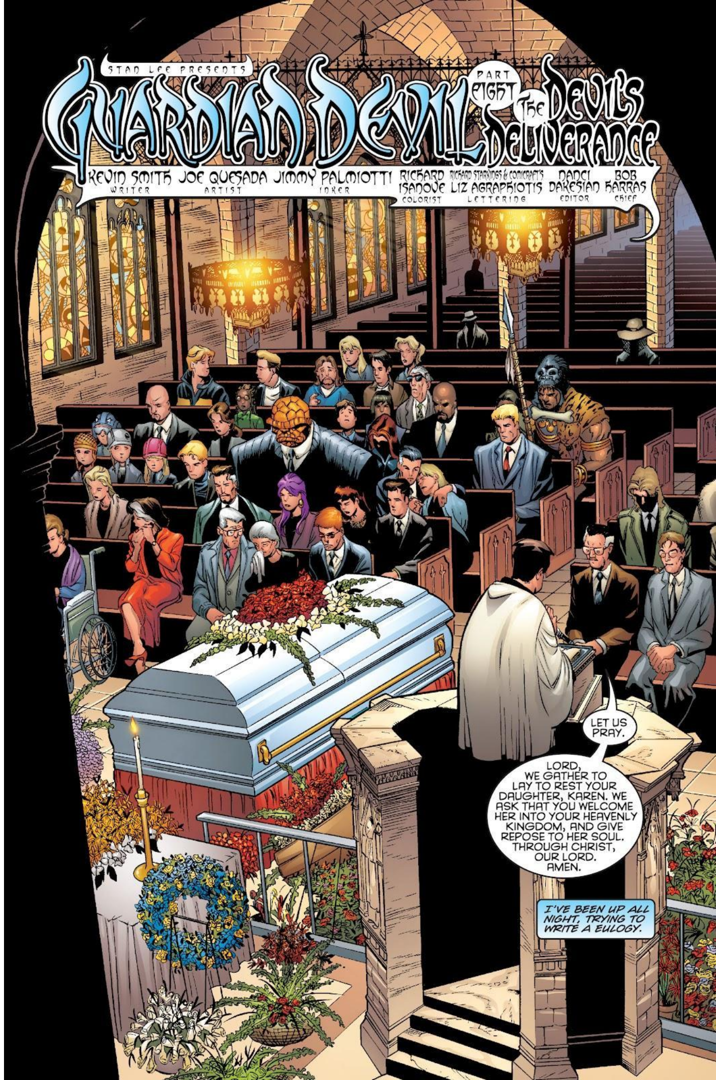
TK
FFSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSS
UNG.
THE MOMENT THE GLASS LIFTS EVEN A CENTIMETER, I CAN HEAR ALL THE BABY'S INTERNALS.
TAK
HER HEART RATE'S NORMAL.
HER LUNGS ARE STILL FILLED WITH AIR.
BECK IS LUCKY.
YOU'RE NOT GOING TO WANT TO MISS THIS, DAREDEVIL...
I DON'T KNOW WHO'S GOING TO DERIVE MORE SATISFACTION OUT OF THIS -- ME OR YOU.
HIS HEART IS RACING, BUT I DON'T FLINCH.
I KNOW WHERE THAT BULLET'S HEADED.
WHY'S THAT?


BECAUSE I STOLE THIS ONE TOO...
FROM KRAVEN.
KABLAM
PAR FOR THE COURSE.
THE NOISE DIDN'T SCARE THE BABY IN THE LEAST. SHE DOESN'T SHED A SINGLE TEAR.


NEITHER DO I.


MARVEL
KNIGHTS
MAR
#8
WWW.MARVEL.COM
HERE COMES...
DAREDEVIL
THE MAN WITHOUT FEAR!
SMITH
QUESADA
PALMIOTTI

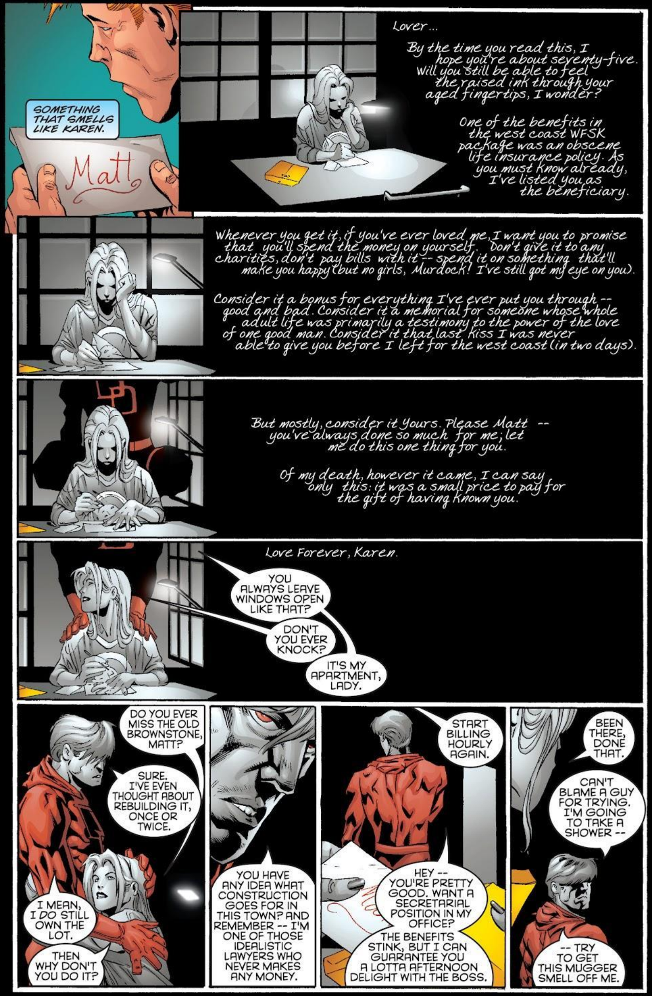

HE PLAGUED THE CITY FOR YEARS WITH HIS BIZARRE PENCHANT FOR THEATRICAL CRIMES. MANY DISMISSED HIM MERELY AS A "BUBBLE-HEADED" GRAND-STANDER. BUT TWO DAYS AGO, QUENTIN BECK -- THE MAN WHOSE NOM DE CRIME WAS MYSTERIO -- WAS FOUND DEAD OF AN APPARENT SUICIDE IN A BUILDING HE OWNED IN MIDTOWN.
I'M ALMOST READY, PETER.
DEATH OF A MASKED MAN
POLICE ALSO DISCOVERED THE BODIES OF AT LEAST TWO DOZEN COSTUMED MEN, ASSUMED TO BE IN THE EMPLOY OF THE SO-CALLED "SUPER-VILLAIN." THE D.A.'S OFFICE HAS YET TO MAKE A STATEMENT, PENDING FURTHER INVESTIGATION.
PETER?
TIGER? ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?
Hmm?
AT A PRESS CONFERENCE HE CALLED THIS MORNING, DAILY BUGLE EDITOR IN CHIEF J. JONAH JAMESON INDICATED THAT -- WHILE HE LACKED PROOF ON THE MATTER --
-- HE FELT THE VIGILANTE KNOWN AS SPIDER-MAN WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE CARNAGE.
HE'S A MENACE! I'VE BEEN SAYING IT FOR YEARS, HAVEN'T I?! WHAT'S IT GOING TO TAKE TO GET THROUGH TO YOU PEOPLE?!
ARE YOU OKAY?
I GUESS. IT'S JUST...
MYSTERIO... HE...
I MEAN, AFTER ALL THIS TIME -- HE'S GONE. I'VE SPENT YEARS FIGHTING THE GUY, AND NOW HE'S DEAD. IT'S JUST...
I FEEL RESPONSIBLE, SOMEHOW.
PETER, THE MAN WAS A LUNATIC. YOU HAD NOTHING TO DO WITH WHAT HE DID TO HIMSELF... OR ALL THOSE PEOPLE. HE DOESN'T DESERVE YOUR PITY.
IN A RELATED STORY, CHARGES AGAINST HIGH PROFILE LAWYER FRANKLIN NELSON IN THE MCKENZIE MURDER CASE HAVE BEEN DROPPED FOLLOWING THE DISCOVERY OF INCRIMINATING EVIDENCE AMONGST BECK'S FILES. MORE ON THAT AT THE TOP OF THE HOUR.
DON'T MOURN FOR MYSTERIO. MOURN FOR SOMEONE WHO DESERVES IT.
AND FINALLY TODAY, THE CITY LAYS TO REST ONE OF IT'S OWN THIS MORNING...

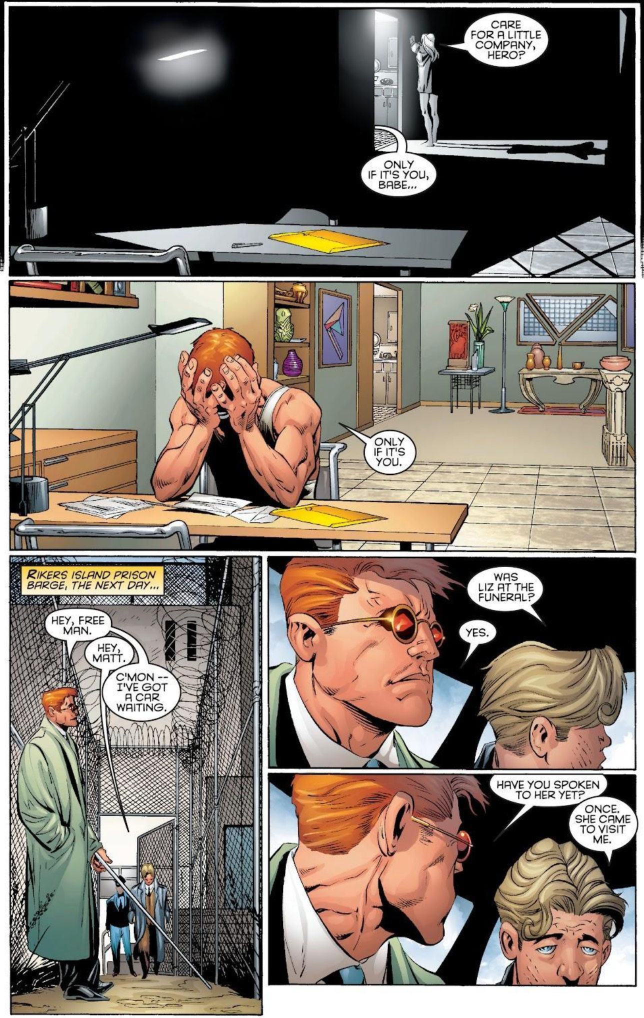

STAN LEE PRESENTS
GUARDIAN DEVIL
PART EIGHT
THE DEVIL'S DELIVERANCE
KEVIN SMITH WRITER
JOE QUESADA ARTIST
JIMMY PALMIOTTI INKER
RICHARD ISANOVE COLORIST
RICHARD STARKINGS & COMICRAFT'S LIZ AGRAPHIOTIS LETTERING
NANCI DAKESIAN EDITOR
BOB HARRAS CHIEF
LET US PRAY.
LORD, WE GATHER TO LAY TO REST YOUR DAUGHTER, KAREN. WE ASK THAT YOU WELCOME HER INTO YOUR HEAVENLY KINGDOM, AND GIVE REPOSE TO HER SOUL. THROUGH CHRIST, OUR LORD. AMEN.
I'VE BEEN UP ALL NIGHT, TRYING TO WRITE A EULOGY.


BUT HOW CAN I POSSIBLY DO KAREN JUSTICE WITH A FEW PAGES OF SCRIBBLINGS CONCEIVED THROUGH A VEIL OF TEARS?
WHAT CAN I SAY TO THESE PEOPLE THAT COULD EVEN REMOTELY COMMUNICATE ALL THAT KAREN WAS AND HOW MUCH SHE MEANT TO ME?
I'VE ASKED MATTHEW MURDOCK, KAREN'S LONGTIME BOYFRIEND, TO SAY A FEW WORDS ABOUT THE WOMAN WE ALL HELD SUCH A SPECIAL PLACE IN OUR HEARTS FOR.
MISTER MURDOCK?
IT'S VULGAR -- PLAYING THE ROLE OF THE HELPLESS BLIND MAN AT THE FUNERAL OF ONE OF THE ONLY PEOPLE WHO KNEW THE WHOLE TRUTH ABOUT ME.
I FEEL LIKE A LIAR.
HELLO. THIS MAY TAKE AWHILE.
AHEM...
Um... KAREN WAS...

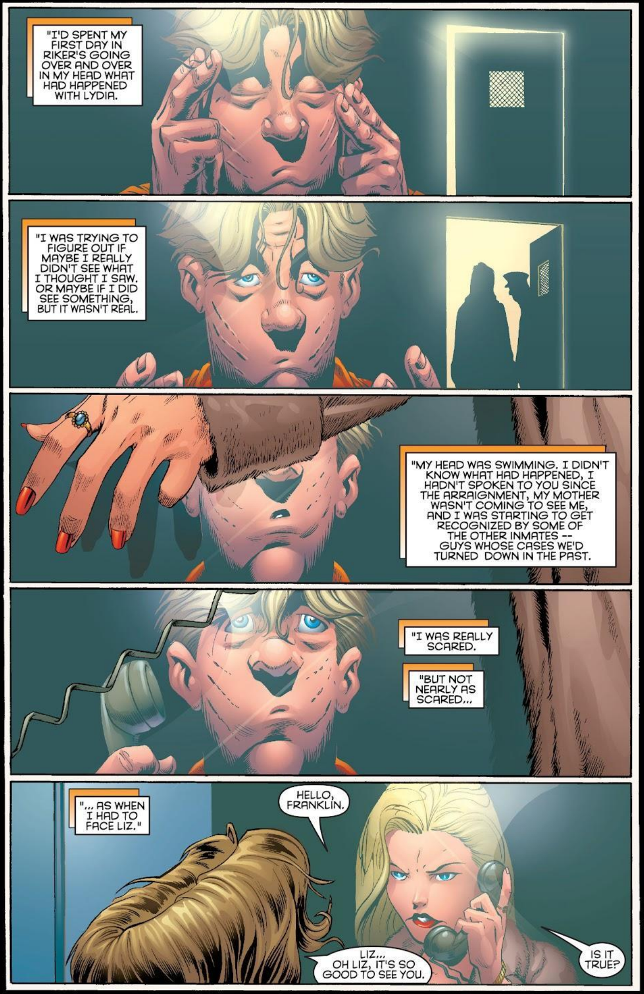

KAREN WAS...
NO...
THERE ARE NO WORDS.
I'LL MISS YOU.
THERE ARE NO WORDS.


AN HOUR LATER...
MISTER MURDOCK?
HELLO, PETER.
MATT... I DON'T EVEN KNOW WHERE TO BEGIN.
I'M NOT GOING TO BE VERY GOOD COMPANY RIGHT NOW, PETER.
I UNDERSTAND. BUT I THINK THERE ARE A FEW THINGS WE SHOULD TALK ABOUT.
YES. THERE ARE.
DOES TOMORROW NIGHT SOUND OKAY? HOW ABOUT THE USUAL PLACE? SAY -- NINE O'CLOCK?
I'LL TRY.
I GO HOME.
ONCE HER RADIO CAREER TOOK OFF, KAREN RETAINED THE UPPER WEST SIDE FIRM OF MOSIER, SCHWALBACH, AND PEREIRA TO HANDLE HER CONTRACTS.
SHE'D ALWAYS MAINTAINED THAT USING ME AS HER LAWYER WOULD BE A LITTLE TOO CLOSE TO HOME FOR HER.
I JUST FOUND OUT WHY.
THERE WAS A SIZEABLE INSURANCE POLICY THROUGH THE STATION...
...FISK'S STATION, IRONICALLY ENOUGH...
...THAT SHE NEVER TOLD ME ABOUT. THE BENEFITS -- IF THEY COULD TRULY BE CALLED THAT -- ARE IN THE LOW SEVEN FIGURES.
IT DOES ME LITTLE GOOD, AS I CAN'T USE IT TO BUY HER LIFE BACK.
THEN, IN THE BOTTOM OF THE ENVELOPE, I FEEL SOMETHING ELSE.


SOMETHING THAT SMELLS LIKE KAREN.
Matt
Lover...
By the time you read this, I hope you're about seventy-five. Will you still be able to feel the raised ink through your aged fingertips, I wonder?
One of the benefits in the west coast WFSK package was an obscene life insurance policy. As you must know already, I've listed you as the beneficiary.
Whenever you get it, if you've ever loved me, I want you to promise that you'll spend the money on yourself. Don't give it to any charities, don't pay bills with it -- spend it on something that'll make you happy (but no girls, Murdock! I've still got my eye on you).
Consider it a bonus for everything I've ever put you through -- good and bad. Consider it a memorial for someone whose whole adult life was primarily a testimony to the power of the love of one good man. Consider it that last kiss I was never able to give you before I left for the west coast (in two days).
But mostly, consider it Yours. Please Matt -- you've always done so much for me; let me do this one thing for you.
Of my death, however it came, I can say only this: it was a small price to pay for the gift of having known you.
Love Forever, Karen.
YOU ALWAYS LEAVE WINDOWS OPEN LIKE THAT?
DON'T YOU EVER KNOCK?
IT'S MY APARTMENT, LADY.
DO YOU EVER MISS THE OLD BROWNSTONE, MATT?
SURE. I'VE EVEN THOUGHT ABOUT REBUILDING IT, ONCE OR TWICE.
I MEAN, I DO STILL OWN THE LOT.
THEN WHY DON'T YOU DO IT?
YOU HAVE ANY IDEA WHAT CONSTRUCTION GOES FOR IN THIS TOWN? AND REMEMBER -- I'M ONE OF THOSE IDEALISTIC LAWYERS WHO NEVER MAKES ANY MONEY.
START BILLING HOURLY AGAIN.
HEY -- YOU'RE PRETTY GOOD. WANT A SECRETARIAL POSITION IN MY OFFICE?
THE BENEFITS STINK, BUT I CAN GUARANTEE YOU A LOTTA AFTERNOON DELIGHT WITH THE BOSS.
BEEN THERE, DONE THAT.
CAN'T BLAME A GUY FOR TRYING. I'M GOING TO TAKE A SHOWER --
-- TRY TO GET THIS MUGGER SMELL OFF ME.



CARE FOR A LITTLE COMPANY, HERO?
ONLY IF IT'S YOU, BABE...
ONLY IF IT'S YOU.
RIKERS ISLAND PRISON BARGE, THE NEXT DAY...
HEY, FREE MAN.
HEY, MATT.
C'MON -- I'VE GOT A CAR WAITING.
WAS LIZ AT THE FUNERAL?
YES.
HAVE YOU SPOKEN TO HER YET?
ONCE. SHE CAME TO VISIT ME.



"I'D SPENT MY FIRST DAY IN RIKER'S GOING OVER AND OVER IN MY HEAD WHAT HAD HAPPENED WITH LYDIA.
"I WAS TRYING TO FIGURE OUT IF MAYBE I REALLY DIDN'T SEE WHAT I THOUGHT I SAW. OR MAYBE IF I DID SEE SOMETHING, BUT IT WASN'T REAL.
"MY HEAD WAS SWIMMING. I DIDN'T KNOW WHAT HAD HAPPENED, I HADN'T SPOKEN TO YOU SINCE THE ARRAIGNMENT, MY MOTHER WASN'T COMING TO SEE ME, AND I WAS STARTING TO GET RECOGNIZED BY SOME OF THE OTHER INMATES -- GUYS WHOSE CASES WE'D TURNED DOWN IN THE PAST.
"I WAS REALLY SCARED.
"BUT NOT NEARLY AS SCARED...
"... AS WHEN I HAD TO FACE LIZ."
HELLO, FRANKLIN.
LIZ... OH LIZ, IT'S SO GOOD TO SEE YOU.
IS IT TRUE?


LIZ! I DIDN'T KILL THAT WOMAN! YOU'VE GOTTA BELIEVE ME! SHE WAS SOME SORT OF... I DON'T KNOW... DEMON! SHE THREW HERSELF OUT THAT WINDOW! I SWEAR!
BUT YOU DID SPEND THE NIGHT WITH HER?
I THOUGHT SO.
"LIZ NEVER HAD A NORMAL LIFE, MATT. HER HUSBAND AND HER FATHER-IN-LAW...
"WELL -- YOU KNOW...
"BUT SHE USED TO TELL ME I REPRESENTED STABILITY FOR HER -- SOMEONE SHE COULD COUNT ON.
"AND I LET HER DOWN.
LIZ, I'M SO SORRY... PLEASE -- YOU HAVE TO KNOW HOW SORRY I AM...!
"I COULDN'T HEAR HER CLEARLY THROUGH THE GLASS, BUT I KNOW WHAT SHE SAID."
TEARS AND SORROW -- WELCOME TO MY WORLD, FRANKLIN.
"AND THEN SHE WAS GONE."


IT DOESN'T MATTER THAT THEY CLEARED THE CHARGES, MATT...
BECAUSE THEY CAN'T ERASE THE REAL CRIME.
NEXT EXIT
THE BROOKLYN BRIDGE, LATER THAT NIGHT...
CARE FOR A LITTLE COMPANY?
NO OFFENSE, PETE -- BUT THE COMPANY I'D REALLY CARE FOR WON'T BE SHOWING UP TONIGHT.
OR EVER.
THAT'S SOMETHING I WANT TO TALK TO YOU ABOUT.
BUT FIRST, I NEED TO FILL IN THE BLANKS ON MYSTERIO.
I TELL HIM ABOUT HIS ONE-TIME FOE, AND ABOUT HOW HIS TERMINAL CONDITION PUSHED HIM OVER THE EDGE. ABOUT HOW HE CHOSE ME AND MY LIFE TO USE IN HIS SWAN SONG RAMPAGE. ABOUT HOW HE'S HIRED BULLSEYE...
I TELL HIM ABOUT THE BABY, AND ABOUT THE KINGPIN'S ROLE IN ALL OF THIS. AND ABOUT HOW MYSTERIO ULTIMATELY TOOK HIS OWN LIFE...
I TELL HIM THAT PART WITH AN ALMOST SHAMEFUL ENTHUSIASM.
AND WHEN I'M DONE, HE SAYS...
I'M SORRY, MATT.
I KNOW WHAT YOU'RE GOING THROUGH.


IT HAPPENED TO ME ONCE. IT WAS A LONG TIME AGO --
-- BUT NOT SO LONG AGO THAT I STILL DON'T THINK ABOUT IT EVERY TIME I'M TRADING PUNCHES WITH ONE OF THESE EGOTISTICAL MENTAL CASES.
THERE'S NOTHING WORSE THAN LOSING SOMEONE YOU LOVE TO THE JOB.
I'VE BEEN THERE BEFORE, TOO. BUT WHEN SOMEONE DIES AFTER LEADING A RECKLESS LIFE THAT INEVITABLY CATCHES UP WITH THEM...
YOU LEARN TO SLEEP AT NIGHT, I GUESS.
SOONER OR LATER.
YES, BUT KAREN WAS AN INNOCENT.
THE CONCLUSION I'VE COME TO AFTER YEARS SPENT DOING THIS IS THAT THERE ARE NO INNOCENTS. EVERYONE'S GUILTY. EVEN US.
ESPECIALLY US.
BECAUSE FOR ALL THE 'GOOD' THAT WE TRY TO DO, WE CAN'T DAMN THE TORRENT OF DEATH AND INJUSTICE THAT THREATENS TO DROWN US EVERYDAY. WE'RE GUILTY OF BEING BANDAGES ON LEPROSY, BUT STILL OUR HUBRIS WOULD HAVE US BELIEVE THAT WE CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE.
WELL, WE DIDN'T MAKE ANY DIFFERENCE TO QUENTIN BECK.
ALL THAT DEATH AND MADNESS HE CAUSED -- ALL IN THE NAME OF SELF-ESTEEM. THE GUY ENDED LIVES -- PROMISING OR OTHERWISE --
-- AND FOR WHAT? TO PROVE HE WASN'T AS BIG A LOSER AS HE FELT THE WORLD THOUGHT HE WAS?
WHAT A JOKE.
NO PETER -- THERE ARE NO INNOCENTS. EVEN IN THE STRICTEST OF DEFINITIONS, PEOPLE LIKE THE LOVED ONE YOU MENTIONED AND KAREN ARE STILL GUILTY.
THEY'RE GUILTY OF DYING, AND LEAVING US ALONE IN THIS MIRE OF SOLITUDE AND MISERY.

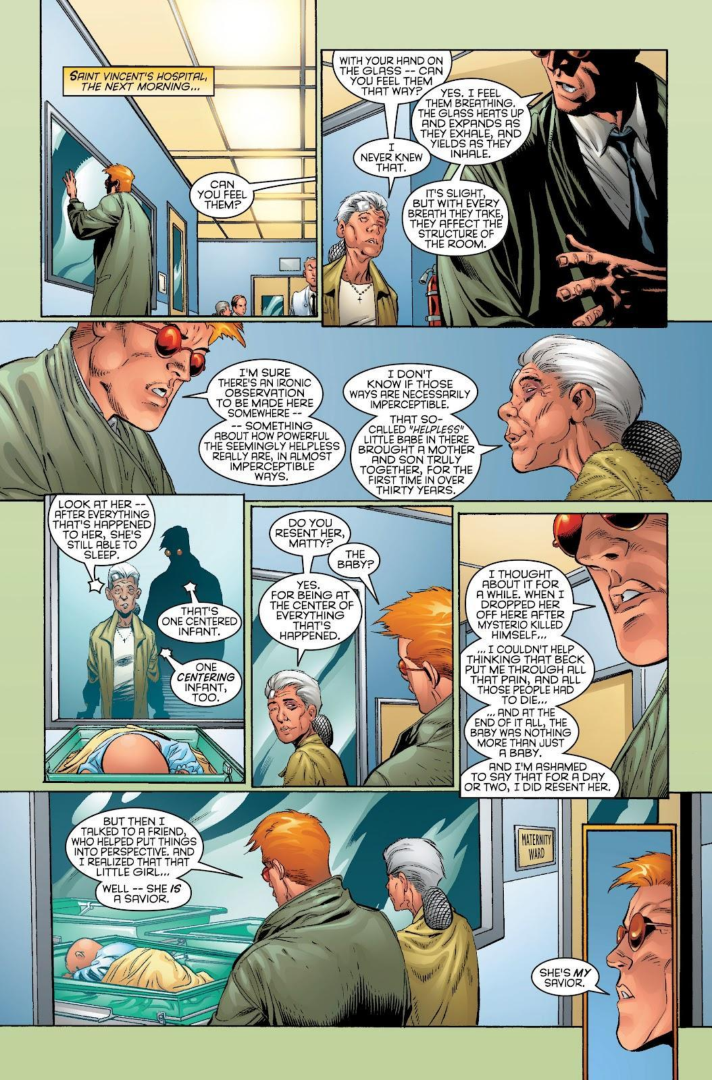

AND CAN YOU BLAME THEM? WHY SHOULD THEY HOLD ONTO LIFE? JUST TO BE WITH LIARS LIKE US? THAT'S WHAT WE ARE, REALLY -- LIARS. ALL WE OFFER IS FALSE HOPE.
WE TELL PEOPLE BY PUTTING ON THESE CLOTHES AND BEATING UP CHAIN SNATCHERS AND MUGGERS THAT "IT'LL ALL BE OKAY. WE'RE HERE TO STOP THE MADNESS." BUT WE'RE LYING, BECAUSE WE KNOW WE CAN'T STOP IT ALL; THERE'S TOO MUCH.
AND IN THE CASE OF SOMEONE LIKE KAREN, WE'VE DAMNED THEM SIMPLY BY THIRD PARTY ASSOCIATION. COSTUMED LUNATIC 'A' HATES ME, SO IN AN EFFORT TO DESTROY ME, HE'LL KILL HERO FRIEND 'B'.
IT'S INSANITY, MAN! AND WE'RE THE CRUCIAL COG IN THE DAMNATION MACHINE, PEOPLE LIKE US! BECAUSE NOTHING GOOD COMES OUT OF ANYTHING WE DO!
BECAUSE WITH BECK AND ALL OF HIS VICTIMS OF THE LAST FEW WEEKS DEAD AND BURIED, CAN YOU TELL ME ONE THING -- JUST ONE THING -- THAT MAKES ANY SENSE IN THAT MESS WHATSOEVER?!?
YOU SAVED THAT BABY GIRL'S LIFE, MATT.
THINK ABOUT IT.
GOTTA GO.
THWIP
SEE YOU AROUND CAMPUS.
THANKS, PETER.
I OWE YOU ONE.

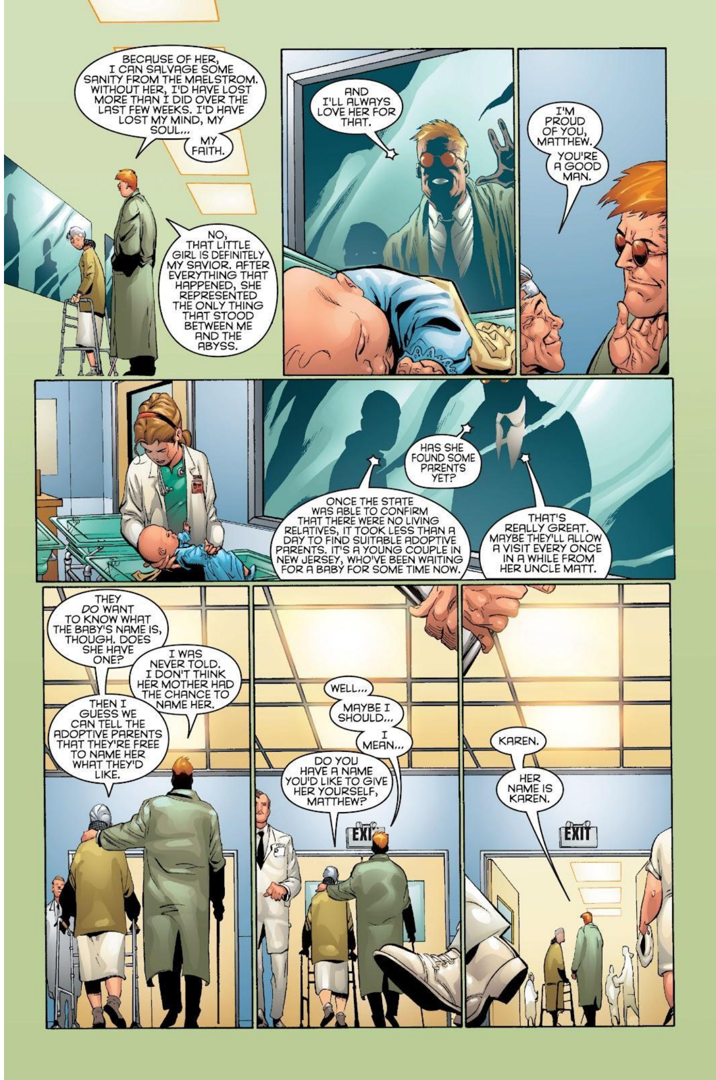

1313 AVENUE B, APARTMENT 9B...
KNOCK KNOCK
TONY... ?
YOU... !
WHOA!
WAIT... NATASHA... !
PSYCHOPATH! PERHAPS I SHOULD EXTEND YOU THE SAME COURTESY YOU SHOWED ME ON THE ROOF, YES?!
TALK FAST BEFORE I SEVER YOUR VOCAL CHORDS!
MUH... MYSTERIO...
THAT WAS YOU?
YES...
I'M SORRY. I HAVE SOME EXPLAINING TO DO.
I'D SAY YOU DO INDEED, COMRADE. COME INTO MY PARLOR...


LATER...
YOU EXPECT ME TO BELIEVE YOU WERE DRUGGED?
CAN YOU THINK OF ANY OTHER REASON I'D ATTACK YOU LIKE THAT?
ONE OR TWO.
I'LL ALLOW, MATTHEW, THAT PERHAPS WHATEVER TOXIN MYSTERIO POISONED YOUR LOGIC WITH EXACERBATED YOUR RAGE AGAINST ME. BUT I THINK THERE WAS SOMETHING THERE TO BEGIN WITH.
LIKE WHAT?
I THINK BENEATH YOUR NOBLE, QUIET EXTERIOR, LIES THE HEART OF A MAN WHO FEELS BETRAYED BY WOMEN.
THINK ABOUT IT: YOU WERE ABANDONED BY YOUR MOTHER AT SUCH A YOUNG AGE. AND THEN WHEN YOU GET INVOLVED WITH WOMEN, THEY SCAR YOU TERRIBLY. I KNOW I NEVER GOT SERIOUS ENOUGH FOR YOU. KAREN...
POOR KAREN...
SHE BROKE YOUR HEART TOO MANY TIMES TO NUMBER. GLORI TURNED TO YOUR BEST FRIEND FOR COMFORT DURING THAT FISK BUSINESS. THAT CRAZED HARLOT YOU CARRIED ON WITH -- THE ONE WITH THE PAINTED FACE... ?
TYPHOID MARY.
YES -- SUCH AN UNFORTUNATE NAME.
AND THEN THERE'S THAT GREEK ASSASSIN...

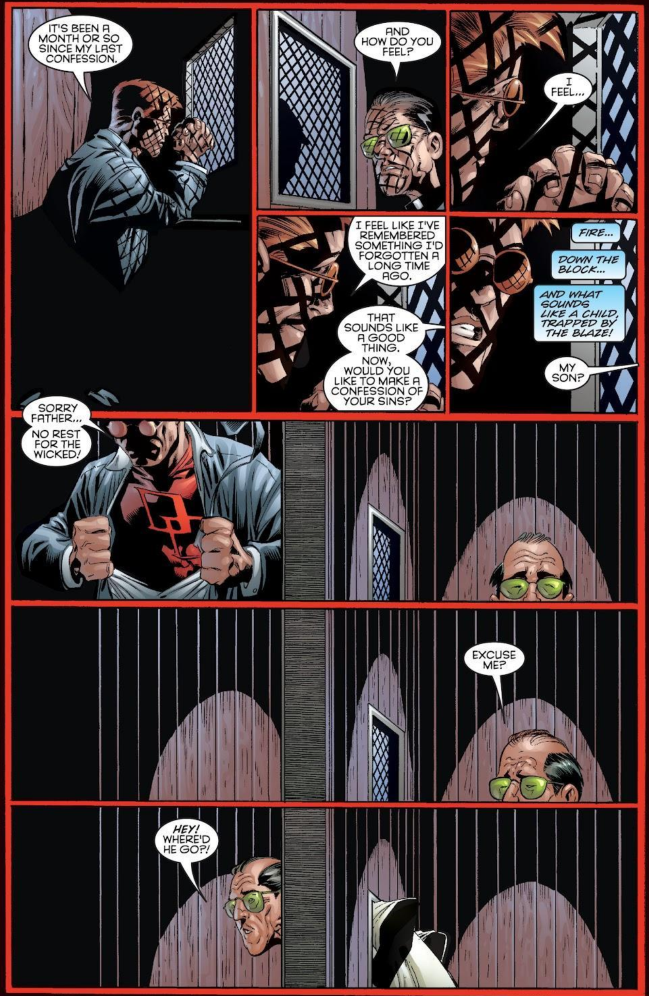

YOUR ROMANTIC HISTORY LEAVES MUCH TO BE DESIRED, MATTHEW. THE WOMEN YOU'VE FALLEN IN WITH HAVEN'T NECESSARILY BEEN ANGELS, AND THAT'S BOUND TO HAVE AFFECTED YOU OVER THE YEARS.
IT HAS -- AMONGST OTHER THINGS -- MADE YOU VERY FRAGILE.
ARE YOU INSINUATING I'M A MISOGYNIST?
NO, LOVE. BUT I *DO* BELIEVE YOU SHOULD SPEND SOME TIME DOING A LITTLE SOUL-SEARCHING. TAKE A LOOK AT YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH ALL THINGS DISTAFF BEFORE YOU HEAD INTO ANY OTHER FUTURE RELATIONSHIPS.
WHICH, I REALIZE, IS THE LAST THING ON YOUR MIND RIGHT NOW.
YOU ARE ONE OF THE ONLY MEN TO EVER REALLY TOUCH ME, MATTHEW. I TELL YOU THESE THINGS NOT TO HURT YOU, BUT TO HELP YOU.
BECAUSE SOMEONE AS GOOD AS YOU SHOULDN'T BE ALONE.
YOU DESERVE TO BE LOVED AND CONTENT AND FULFILLED IN YOUR PERSONAL LIFE, BECAUSE YOUR LIFE AS DAREDEVIL WILL NEVER OFFER YOU PURCHASE FROM THE STORM. YOU NEED A PLACE TO HANG YOUR HEART AT THE END OF THE DAY.
YOU NEED PEACE.
BUT IF I'VE EVER IMPARTED ANYTHING TO YOU, PLEASE LET IT BE THIS...
LOOK WITHIN YOURSELF FOR THAT PEACE BEFORE YOU LOOK FOR IT IN SOMEONE ELSE. BECAUSE YOU'LL ONLY BE SETTING THAT SOMEONE ELSE UP TO DISAPPOINT YOU.
GOT IT, RED?


GOT IT, RED.
BUT IF YOU EVER TRY TO CRIPPLE ME AGAIN...
...I'LL PUT THE BRIDGE OF YOUR NOSE INTO YOUR BRAIN.
YES, DEAR.
THIS USED TO BE MY HOME.
KINGPIN BLEW IT UP ONCE -- A LONG TIME AGO.
FOR THE FIRST TIME IN MY LIFE I WANT TO THANK HIM.
HE'S GIVEN ME A CHANCE TO REBUILD...
I GOT YOUR CALL. WHAT'S UP?
HAVE YOU SPOKEN WITH YOUR MOTHER YET?
SHE CALLED TO ASK ME BACK TO THE FIRM. YOU TOO. BUT I COULDN'T PICK UP THE PHONE. I'M...
...I'M NOT SURE HOW I FEEL ABOUT HER RIGHT NOW.
WHY DO YOU ASK, ANYWAY?
YOU AND I ARE UNEMPLOYED -- SOMETHING WE NEVER HAVE TO BE AGAIN...
...IF WE WORK SOLELY FOR OURSELVES.
HERE?!
WHY NOT? THE LOT'S MINE.
AND I'VE RECENTLY COME INTO RAINY DAY MONEY THAT I PROMISED SOMEONE I'D PUT TO GOOD, SELFISH USE. SO WHADDYA SAY, FOG?
NELSON AND MURDOCK?
NELSON AND MURDOCK!


SAINT VINCENT'S HOSPITAL, THE NEXT MORNING...
CAN YOU FEEL THEM?
WITH YOUR HAND ON THE GLASS -- CAN YOU FEEL THEM THAT WAY?
YES. I FEEL THEM BREATHING. THE GLASS HEATS UP AND EXPANDS AS THEY EXHALE, AND YIELDS AS THEY INHALE.
I NEVER KNEW THAT.
IT'S SLIGHT, BUT WITH EVERY BREATH THEY TAKE, THEY AFFECT THE STRUCTURE OF THE ROOM.
I'M SURE THERE'S AN IRONIC OBSERVATION TO BE MADE HERE SOMEWHERE --
-- SOMETHING ABOUT HOW POWERFUL THE SEEMINGLY HELPLESS REALLY ARE, IN ALMOST IMPERCEPTIBLE WAYS.
I DON'T KNOW IF THOSE WAYS ARE NECESSARILY IMPERCEPTIBLE.
THAT SO-CALLED "HELPLESS" LITTLE BABE IN THERE BROUGHT A MOTHER AND SON TRULY TOGETHER, FOR THE FIRST TIME IN OVER THIRTY YEARS.
LOOK AT HER -- AFTER EVERYTHING THAT'S HAPPENED TO HER, SHE'S STILL ABLE TO SLEEP.
THAT'S ONE CENTERED INFANT.
ONE CENTERING INFANT, TOO.
DO YOU RESENT HER, MATTY?
THE BABY?
YES. FOR BEING AT THE CENTER OF EVERYTHING THAT'S HAPPENED.
I THOUGHT ABOUT IT FOR A WHILE. WHEN I DROPPED HER OFF HERE AFTER MYSTERIO KILLED HIMSELF...
... I COULDN'T HELP THINKING THAT BECK PUT ME THROUGH ALL THAT PAIN, AND ALL THOSE PEOPLE HAD TO DIE...
... AND AT THE END OF IT ALL, THE BABY WAS NOTHING MORE THAN JUST A BABY.
AND I'M ASHAMED TO SAY THAT FOR A DAY OR TWO, I DID RESENT HER.
BUT THEN I TALKED TO A FRIEND, WHO HELPED PUT THINGS INTO PERSPECTIVE. AND I REALIZED THAT THAT LITTLE GIRL...
WELL -- SHE IS A SAVIOR.
MATERNITY WARD
SHE'S MY SAVIOR.


BECAUSE OF HER, I CAN SALVAGE SOME SANITY FROM THE MAELSTROM. WITHOUT HER, I'D HAVE LOST MORE THAN I DID OVER THE LAST FEW WEEKS. I'D HAVE LOST MY MIND, MY SOUL...
MY FAITH.
NO, THAT LITTLE GIRL IS DEFINITELY MY SAVIOR. AFTER EVERYTHING THAT HAPPENED, SHE REPRESENTED THE ONLY THING THAT STOOD BETWEEN ME AND THE ABYSS.
AND I'LL ALWAYS LOVE HER FOR THAT.
I'M PROUD OF YOU, MATTHEW.
YOU'RE A GOOD MAN.
HAS SHE FOUND SOME PARENTS YET?
ONCE THE STATE WAS ABLE TO CONFIRM THAT THERE WERE NO LIVING RELATIVES, IT TOOK LESS THAN A DAY TO FIND SUITABLE ADOPTIVE PARENTS. IT'S A YOUNG COUPLE IN NEW JERSEY, WHO'VE BEEN WAITING FOR A BABY FOR SOME TIME NOW.
THAT'S REALLY GREAT. MAYBE THEY'LL ALLOW A VISIT EVERY ONCE IN A WHILE FROM HER UNCLE MATT.
THEY DO WANT TO KNOW WHAT THE BABY'S NAME IS, THOUGH. DOES SHE HAVE ONE?
I WAS NEVER TOLD. I DON'T THINK HER MOTHER HAD THE CHANCE TO NAME HER.
THEN I GUESS WE CAN TELL THE ADOPTIVE PARENTS THAT THEY'RE FREE TO NAME HER WHAT THEY'D LIKE.
WELL...
MAYBE I SHOULD...
I MEAN...
DO YOU HAVE A NAME YOU'D LIKE TO GIVE HER YOURSELF, MATTHEW?
EXIT
KAREN.
HER NAME IS KAREN.
EXIT


THE KITCHEN HAS A SOUND TO IT ALL IT'S OWN -- A SOUND I LIKE TO THINK OF AS ITS HEARTBEAT.
I'VE FELT IT SINCE I WAS A CHILD -- EVEN BEFORE THE ACCIDENT. IT'S THE RHYTHM OF THE TRAINS UNDER THE ASPHALT, THE COLLECTIVE MURMUR OF THE NEIGHBORHOOD, THE HUM OF THE STREET LIGHTS -- EVEN DURING THE DAY.
BUT I'VE ALSO ALWAYS FELT ANOTHER PRESENCE ON THESE STREETS.
SOMETHING A LITTLE LESS EXPLICABLE.
SOPHIE
EXPRESS DELIVERY
Maria's Beauty Salon
FORGIVE ME FATHER, FOR I HAVE SINNED.

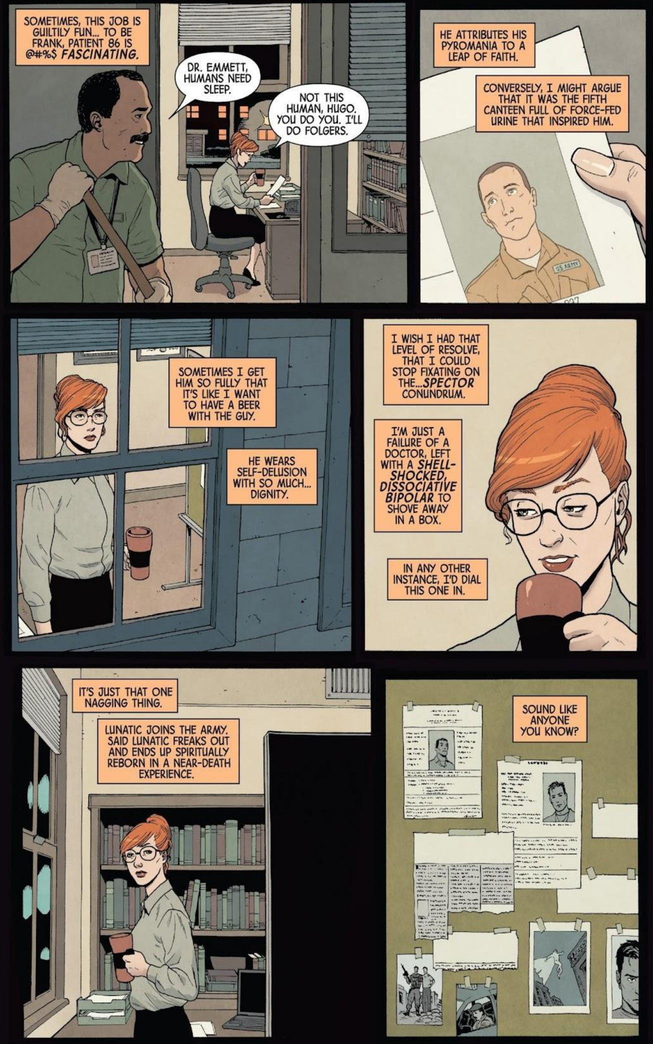

IT'S BEEN A MONTH OR SO SINCE MY LAST CONFESSION.
AND HOW DO YOU FEEL?
I FEEL...
I FEEL LIKE I'VE REMEMBERED SOMETHING I'D FORGOTTEN A LONG TIME AGO.
THAT SOUNDS LIKE A GOOD THING.
NOW, WOULD YOU LIKE TO MAKE A CONFESSION OF YOUR SINS?
FIRE...
DOWN THE BLOCK...
AND WHAT SOUNDS LIKE A CHILD, TRAPPED BY THE BLAZE!
MY SON?
SORRY FATHER...
NO REST FOR THE WICKED!
EXCUSE ME?
HEY! WHERE'D HE GO?!


TO DO MY FATHER'S WORK, PADRE...
TO DO MY FATHER'S WORK...


MARVEL LEGACY
CRAZY RUNS IN THE FAMILY PART 1
188
MOON KNIGHT
BEMIS
BURROWS
LOPES


RAVENCROFT ASYLUM.
YOU SAY REMEMBERING YOUR YOUTH IS LIKE LOOKING THROUGH A LAYER OF JELL-O.
WHERE DO THINGS BECOME LUCID? WHEN DID YOU BECOME YOURSELF?
I LEARNED WHO I WAS IN THE ARMY, THAT MUCH IS CLEAR.
I GET IT. THE ARMY. THE INCIDENT.
ASIDE FROM THE PHYSICAL, WHAT DID YOU WALK AWAY WITH ON THE DAY YOU HURT THEM?
WELL, DR. EMMETT...
I'LL TRY TO SPEAK WITH INTELLIGENCE ABOUT THIS. FORGIVE ME IF IT'S UNNERVING.
IN THE ARMY, I LEARNED THAT THERE IS A GOD.
I SEE.
HOW SO?
I MEAN JUST WHAT I SAID.
ATHEISTS, SKEPTICS, THEY'RE ALL WRONG. FACTUALLY.
I SAW GOD IN MY FIRE, AND I KNOW WITH ALL CERTAINTY IT WAS HIM.


NON-BELIEVERS DON'T GET HOW SOMEONE SO HUMONGOUS AND STRONG WOULD HOLD US IN SUCH HIGH REGARD.
THAT'S THE ONE PART THEY GET RIGHT. HE DOESN'T CARE FOR MOST PEOPLE.
WELL, IF THAT'S TRUE... TELL ME ABOUT THIS GOD.
HE MADE THE LAWS FOR HOW THE RIVERS RUN AND THINGS CORRODE AND ROT AND HOW WE DESTROY EACH OTHER FOR OUR PIECE OF EARTH.
THE INDISPUTABLE LAWS.
THEY WEREN'T VERY NICE TO ME IN THE ARMY, BUT WHY WOULD THEY BE?
I HAD TO SHOW THEM I WAS MORE DEVOTED, MORE SIGNIFICANT THAN THEY WERE.
SOUNDS A BIT COMPLEX FOR LUNKHEADED ARMY BULLIES TO COMPREHEND. YOU THINK YOU GOT YOUR POINT ACROSS IN THE END?
THEY DIDN'T SEE IT AT FIRST.
I HAD TO BURN THEM.



Marc Spector. Steven Grant. Jake Lockley. Each a distinct personality of one man vying for control. Spector, the original personality, has asserted his dominance and fights to retain that control.

But years ago, as a mercenary, Spector died in Egypt under a statue of the Moon God **Khonshu.** In the shadow of the ancient deity, Marc returned to life. From then on, Marc took on a new aspect in honor of Khonshu, dedicating his second life to fighting crime as…

MOON KNIGHT

Writer
MAX BEMIS

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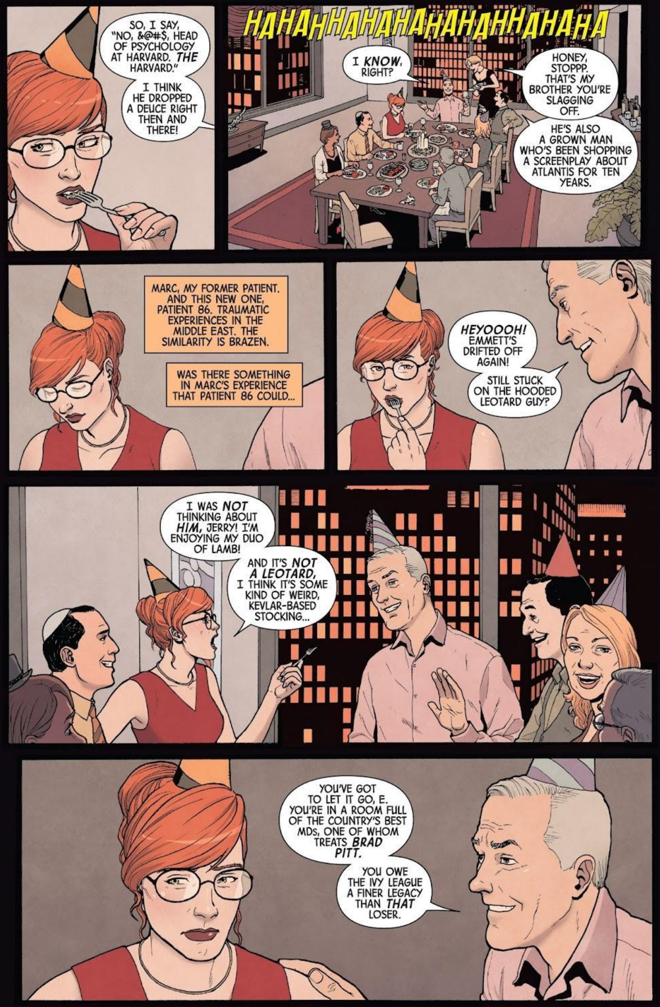
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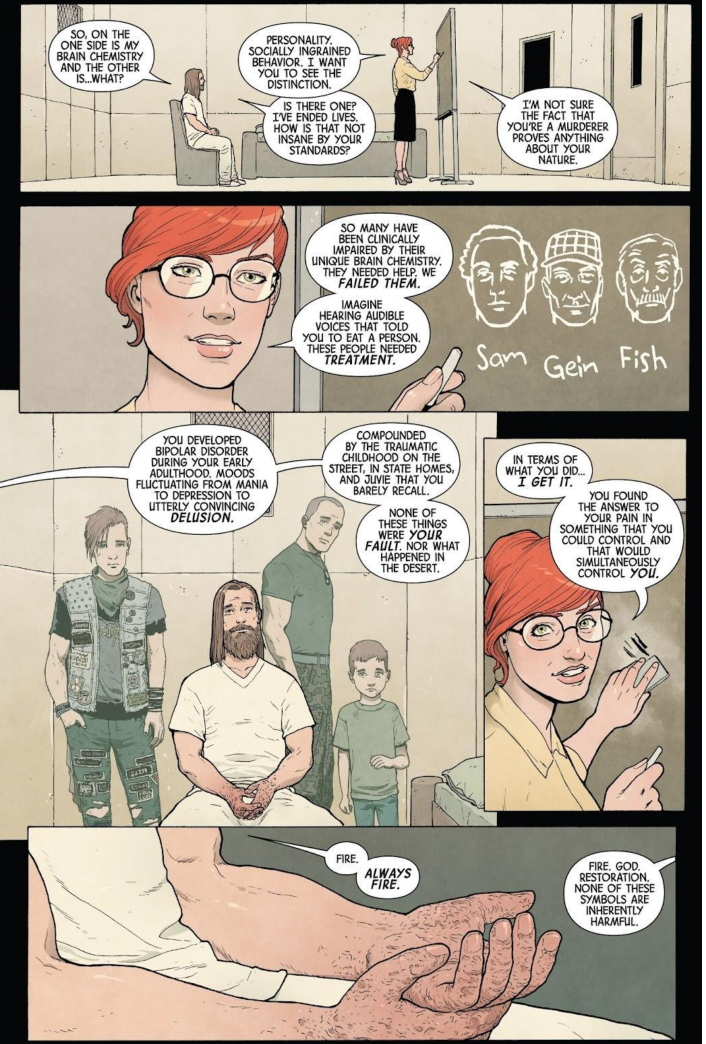
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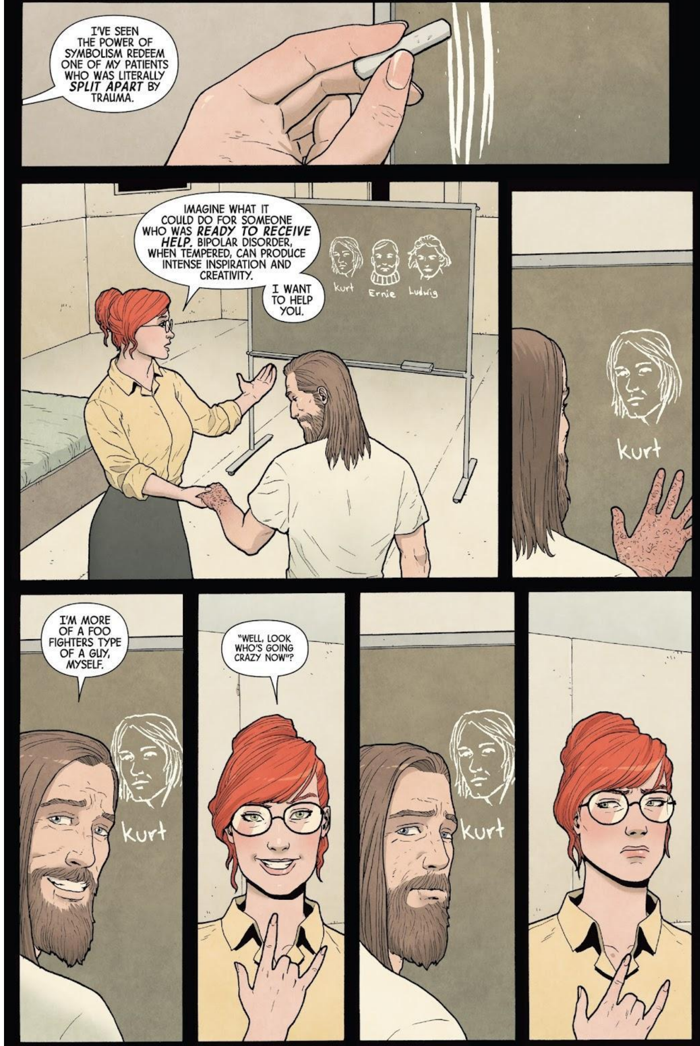
Executive Producer
ALAN FINE


SO, I SAY, "NO, &@#$, HEAD OF PSYCHOLOGY AT HARVARD. *THE* HARVARD."
I THINK HE DROPPED A DEUCE RIGHT THEN AND THERE!
HAHAHHAHAHAHAHAHAHHAHAHA
I *KNOW*, RIGHT?
HONEY, STOPPP. THAT'S *MY* BROTHER YOU'RE SLAGGING OFF.
HE'S ALSO A GROWN MAN WHO'S BEEN SHOPPING A SCREENPLAY ABOUT ATLANTIS FOR TEN YEARS.
MARC, MY FORMER PATIENT. AND THIS NEW ONE, PATIENT 86. TRAUMATIC EXPERIENCES IN THE MIDDLE EAST. THE SIMILARITY IS BRAZEN.
WAS THERE SOMETHING IN MARC'S EXPERIENCE THAT PATIENT 86 COULD...
HEYOOOH! EMMETT'S DRIFTED OFF AGAIN!
STILL STUCK ON THE HOODED LEOTARD GUY?
I WAS *NOT* THINKING ABOUT *HIM*, JERRY! I'M ENJOYING MY DUO OF LAMB!
AND IT'S *NOT A LEOTARD*, I THINK IT'S SOME KIND OF WEIRD, KEVLAR-BASED STOCKING...
YOU'VE GOT TO LET IT GO, E. YOU'RE IN A ROOM FULL OF THE COUNTRY'S BEST MDs, ONE OF WHOM TREATS *BRAD PITT.*
YOU OWE THE IVY LEAGUE A FINER LEGACY THAN *THAT* LOSER.

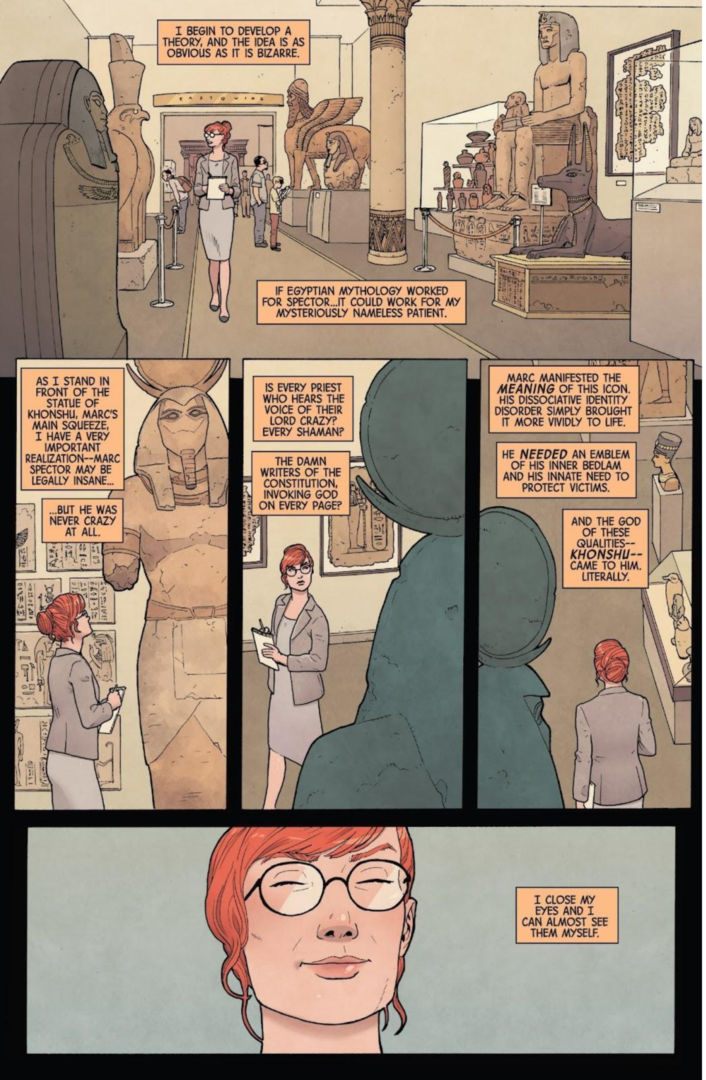

I ANGER-BRUSH AWAY WINE STAINS, REVEALING MY NATURAL SHADE OF COFFEE.
WHAT DOES THAT @#%$ JERRY O'HEIR KNOW? HAS HE WORKED FOR *ANYTHING* SINCE MED SCHOOL?
HE'D *PAY* TO AVOID ALL THE BRILLIANT AND HORRIBLE THINGS I'VE SEEN.
AS A DOCTOR...YOU SHOULD BE CONSTANTLY LEARNING. I KNOW I'M ENRICHING MYSELF. ESPECIALLY WITH PATIENT 86.
THIS IS *BIGGER* THAN ITS CONNECTION TO MARC.
BESIDES...
WHO CARES ABOUT THAT FREAKY SON OF A @#$% ANYWAY?



SO, ON THE ONE SIDE IS MY BRAIN CHEMISTRY AND THE OTHER IS...WHAT?
PERSONALITY. SOCIALLY INGRAINED BEHAVIOR. I WANT YOU TO SEE THE DISTINCTION.
IS THERE ONE? I'VE ENDED LIVES. HOW IS THAT NOT INSANE BY YOUR STANDARDS?
I'M NOT SURE THE FACT THAT YOU'RE A MURDERER PROVES ANYTHING ABOUT YOUR NATURE.
SO MANY HAVE BEEN CLINICALLY IMPAIRED BY THEIR UNIQUE BRAIN CHEMISTRY. THEY NEEDED HELP. WE *FAILED THEM.*
IMAGINE HEARING AUDIBLE VOICES THAT TOLD YOU TO EAT A PERSON. THESE PEOPLE NEEDED *TREATMENT.*
Sam
Gein
Fish
YOU DEVELOPED BIPOLAR DISORDER DURING YOUR EARLY ADULTHOOD. MOODS FLUCTUATING FROM MANIA TO DEPRESSION TO UTTERLY CONVINCING *DELUSION.*
COMPOUNDED BY THE TRAUMATIC CHILDHOOD ON THE STREET, IN STATE HOMES, AND JUVIE THAT YOU BARELY RECALL.
NONE OF THESE THINGS WERE *YOUR FAULT.* NOR WHAT HAPPENED IN THE DESERT.
IN TERMS OF WHAT YOU DID... *I GET IT.*
YOU FOUND THE ANSWER TO YOUR PAIN IN SOMETHING THAT YOU COULD CONTROL AND THAT WOULD SIMULTANEOUSLY CONTROL *YOU.*
FIRE.
ALWAYS FIRE.
FIRE. GOD. RESTORATION. NONE OF THESE SYMBOLS ARE INHERENTLY HARMFUL.



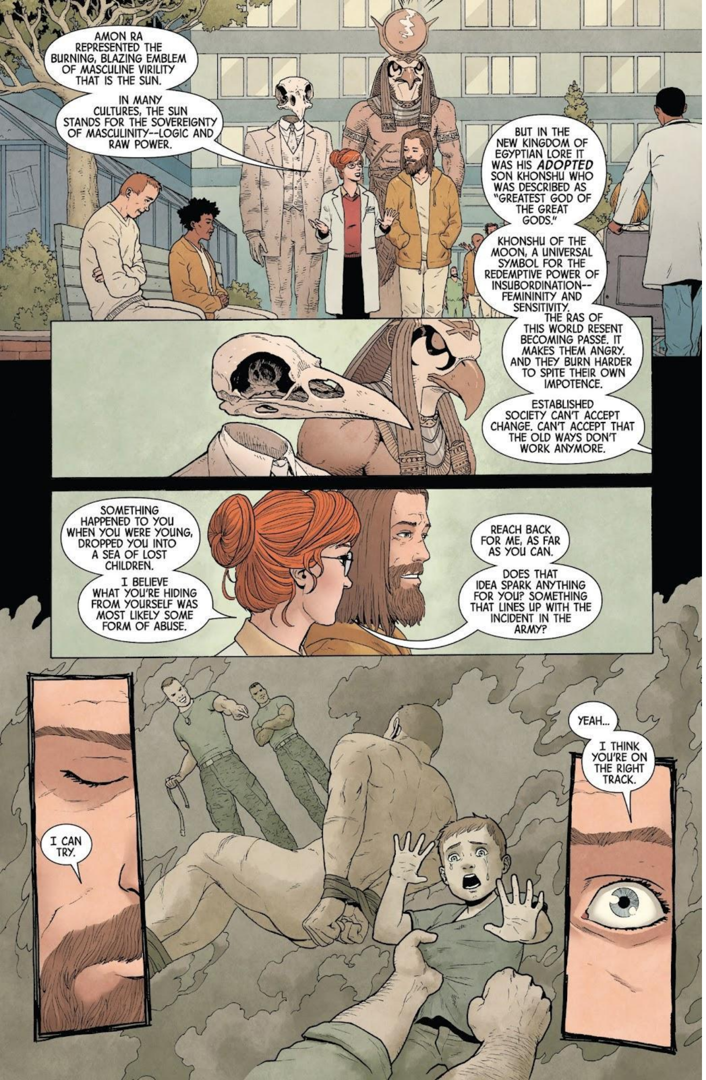
I'VE SEEN THE POWER OF SYMBOLISM REDEEM ONE OF MY PATIENTS WHO WAS LITERALLY *SPLIT APART* BY TRAUMA.
IMAGINE WHAT IT COULD DO FOR SOMEONE WHO WAS *READY TO RECEIVE HELP.* BIPOLAR DISORDER, WHEN TEMPERED, CAN PRODUCE INTENSE INSPIRATION AND CREATIVITY.
I WANT TO HELP YOU.
Kurt
Ernie
Ludwig
Kurt
I'M MORE OF A FOO FIGHTERS TYPE OF A GUY, MYSELF.
Kurt
"WELL, LOOK WHO'S GOING CRAZY NOW"?
Kurt

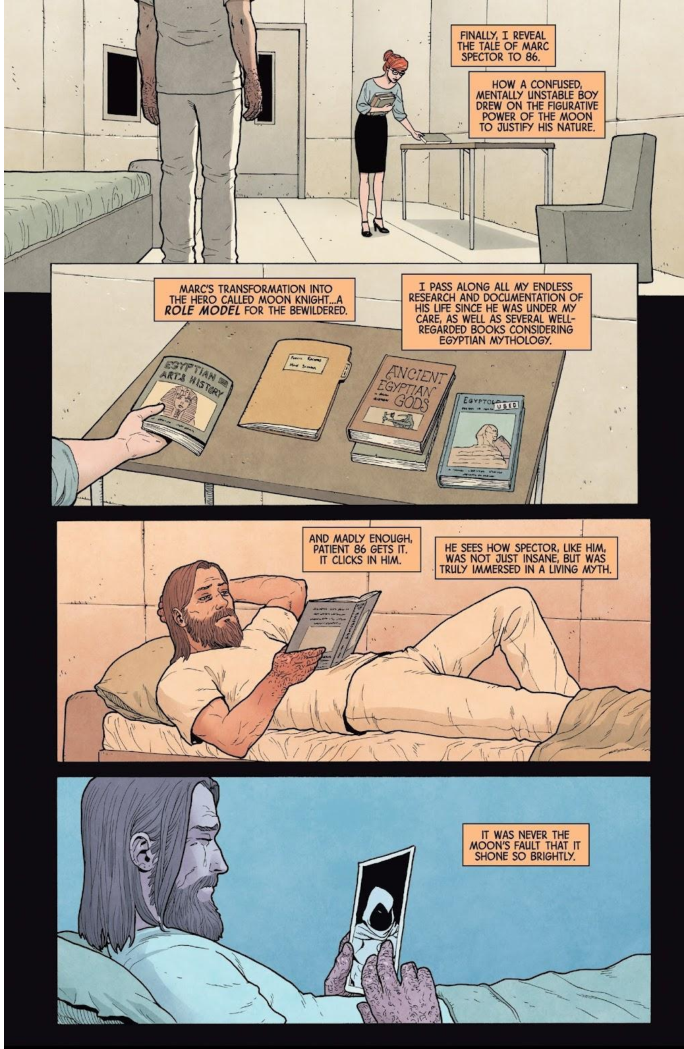

I BEGIN TO DEVELOP A THEORY, AND THE IDEA IS AS OBVIOUS AS IT IS BIZARRE.
IF EGYPTIAN MYTHOLOGY WORKED FOR SPECTOR...IT COULD WORK FOR MY MYSTERIOUSLY NAMELESS PATIENT.
AS I STAND IN FRONT OF THE STATUE OF KHONSHU, MARC'S MAIN SQUEEZE, I HAVE A VERY IMPORTANT REALIZATION--MARC SPECTOR MAY BE LEGALLY INSANE...
...BUT HE WAS NEVER CRAZY AT ALL.
IS EVERY PRIEST WHO HEARS THE VOICE OF THEIR LORD CRAZY? EVERY SHAMAN?
THE DAMN WRITERS OF THE CONSTITUTION, INVOKING GOD ON EVERY PAGE?
MARC MANIFESTED THE *MEANING* OF THIS ICON. HIS DISSOCIATIVE IDENTITY DISORDER SIMPLY BROUGHT IT MORE VIVIDLY TO LIFE.
HE *NEEDED* AN EMBLEM OF HIS INNER BEDLAM AND HIS INNATE NEED TO PROTECT VICTIMS.
AND THE GOD OF THESE QUALITIES--*KHONSHU*--CAME TO HIM. LITERALLY.
I CLOSE MY EYES AND I CAN ALMOST SEE THEM MYSELF.


OSIRIS DRAWS A LINE FROM LOVE TO DEATH WITH AN INSPIRED BRUSHSTROKE AND AFFIRMS MY ACHING MORTALITY.
HORUS SHOOTS ME A LOOK FROM ACROSS THE ROOM, TELLING ME MY DEEP HATRED FOR DOUCHEBAGS AND THEIR KIDS IS A PATHETIC ASPECT OF A JUST WAR.
COULD IMHOTEP BE THE LIVING IDEA THAT BRINGS CLARITY AND HEALING TO 86's TORTURED MIND?
THEN, I SEE RA.


I SEE RA AND IT ALL MAKES SENSE.


THIS IS IT.
THIS IS YOUR CURE.
WHO'S THAT?
THAT, MY FRIEND, IS AMON RA. THE SUN GOD OF THE EGYPTIAN PANTHEON.
I LIKE HIS FUNNY HAIR.
FORGET THAT HAIR. THIS IS THE GUY YOU WANT TO PAY ATTENTION TO. HIS KID.
KHONSHU, THE NOCTURNAL GOD OF THE MOON, SHEPHERD TO THE LOST.
I EXPLAIN MY UNDERSTANDING OF THE TWO GODS' DYNAMIC TO 86.
SOME OF IT COMES FROM ESTABLISHED MYTH, SOME FROM FREUDIAN INTERPRETATION.

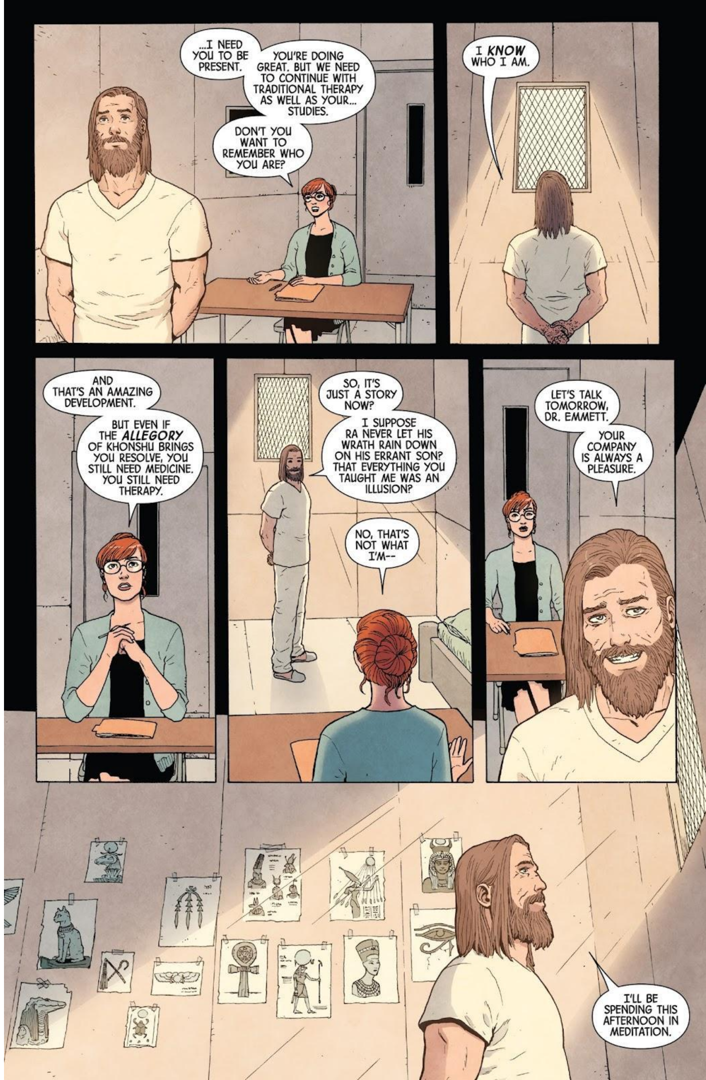

AMON RA REPRESENTED THE BURNING, BLAZING EMBLEM OF MASCULINE VIRILITY THAT IS THE SUN.
IN MANY CULTURES, THE SUN STANDS FOR THE SOVEREIGNTY OF MASCULINITY--LOGIC AND RAW POWER.
BUT IN THE NEW KINGDOM OF EGYPTIAN LORE IT WAS HIS *ADOPTED* SON KHONSHU WHO WAS DESCRIBED AS "GREATEST GOD OF THE GREAT GODS."
KHONSHU OF THE MOON, A UNIVERSAL SYMBOL FOR THE REDEMPTIVE POWER OF INSUBORDINATION--FEMININITY AND SENSITIVITY.
THE RAS OF THIS WORLD RESENT BECOMING PASSÉ. IT MAKES THEM ANGRY. AND THEY BURN HARDER TO SPITE THEIR OWN IMPOTENCE.
ESTABLISHED SOCIETY CAN'T ACCEPT CHANGE. CAN'T ACCEPT THAT THE OLD WAYS DON'T WORK ANYMORE.
SOMETHING HAPPENED TO YOU WHEN YOU WERE YOUNG, DROPPED YOU INTO A SEA OF LOST CHILDREN.
I BELIEVE WHAT YOU'RE HIDING FROM YOURSELF WAS MOST LIKELY SOME FORM OF ABUSE.
REACH BACK FOR ME, AS FAR AS YOU CAN.
DOES THAT IDEA SPARK ANYTHING FOR YOU? SOMETHING THAT LINES UP WITH THE INCIDENT IN THE ARMY?
I CAN TRY.
YEAH...
I THINK YOU'RE ON THE RIGHT TRACK.

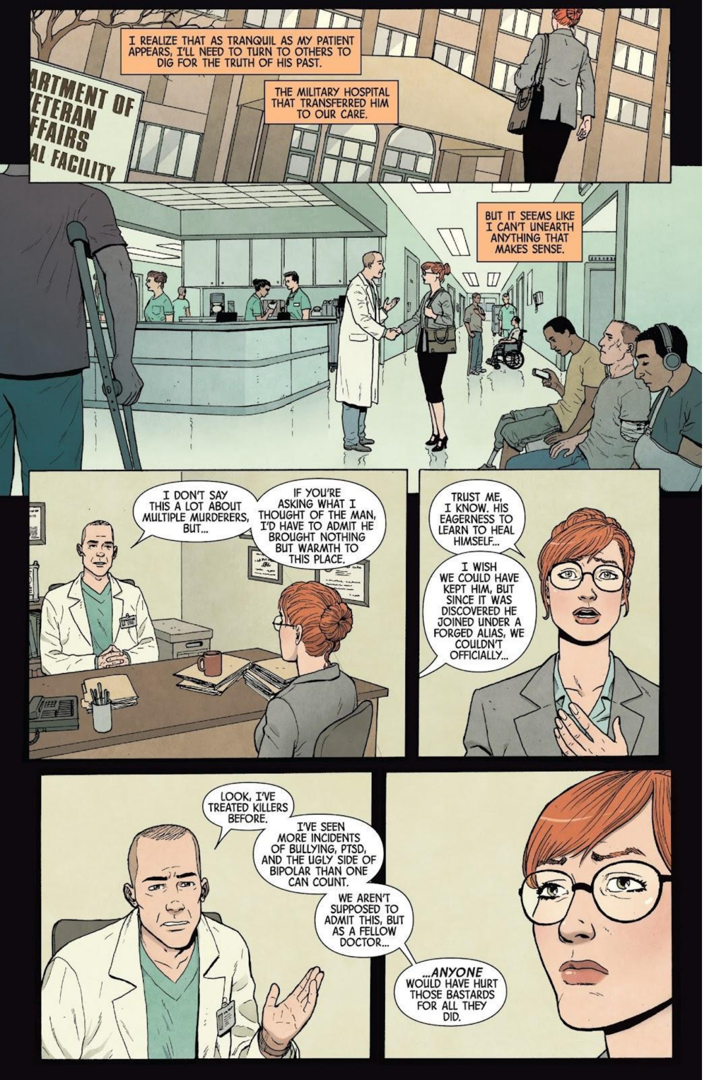

FINALLY, I REVEAL THE TALE OF MARC SPECTOR TO 86.
HOW A CONFUSED, MENTALLY UNSTABLE BOY DREW ON THE FIGURATIVE POWER OF THE MOON TO JUSTIFY HIS NATURE.
MARC'S TRANSFORMATION INTO THE HERO CALLED MOON KNIGHT...A *ROLE MODEL* FOR THE BEWILDERED.
I PASS ALONG ALL MY ENDLESS RESEARCH AND DOCUMENTATION OF HIS LIFE SINCE HE WAS UNDER MY CARE, AS WELL AS SEVERAL WELL-REGARDED BOOKS CONSIDERING EGYPTIAN MYTHOLOGY.
EGYPTIAN ARTS HISTORY
ANCIENT EGYPTIAN GODS
USED
AND MADLY ENOUGH, PATIENT 86 GETS IT. IT CLICKS IN HIM.
HE SEES HOW SPECTOR, LIKE HIM, WAS NOT JUST INSANE, BUT WAS TRULY IMMERSED IN A LIVING MYTH.
IT WAS NEVER THE MOON'S FAULT THAT IT SHONE SO BRIGHTLY.


HUH?
HELP!
HELP!!!




NO!!!
@#$%!
COOKIE BUTTER BEFORE BED.


...I NEED YOU TO BE PRESENT.
YOU'RE DOING GREAT. BUT WE NEED TO CONTINUE WITH TRADITIONAL THERAPY AS WELL AS YOUR... STUDIES.
DON'T YOU WANT TO REMEMBER WHO YOU ARE?
I KNOW WHO I AM.
AND THAT'S AN AMAZING DEVELOPMENT.
BUT EVEN IF THE ALLEGORY OF KHONSHU BRINGS YOU RESOLVE, YOU STILL NEED MEDICINE. YOU STILL NEED THERAPY.
SO, IT'S JUST A STORY NOW?
I SUPPOSE RA NEVER LET HIS WRATH RAIN DOWN ON HIS ERRANT SON? THAT EVERYTHING YOU TAUGHT ME WAS AN ILLUSION?
NO, THAT'S NOT WHAT I'M--
LET'S TALK TOMORROW, DR. EMMETT.
YOUR COMPANY IS ALWAYS A PLEASURE.
I'LL BE SPENDING THIS AFTERNOON IN MEDITATION.

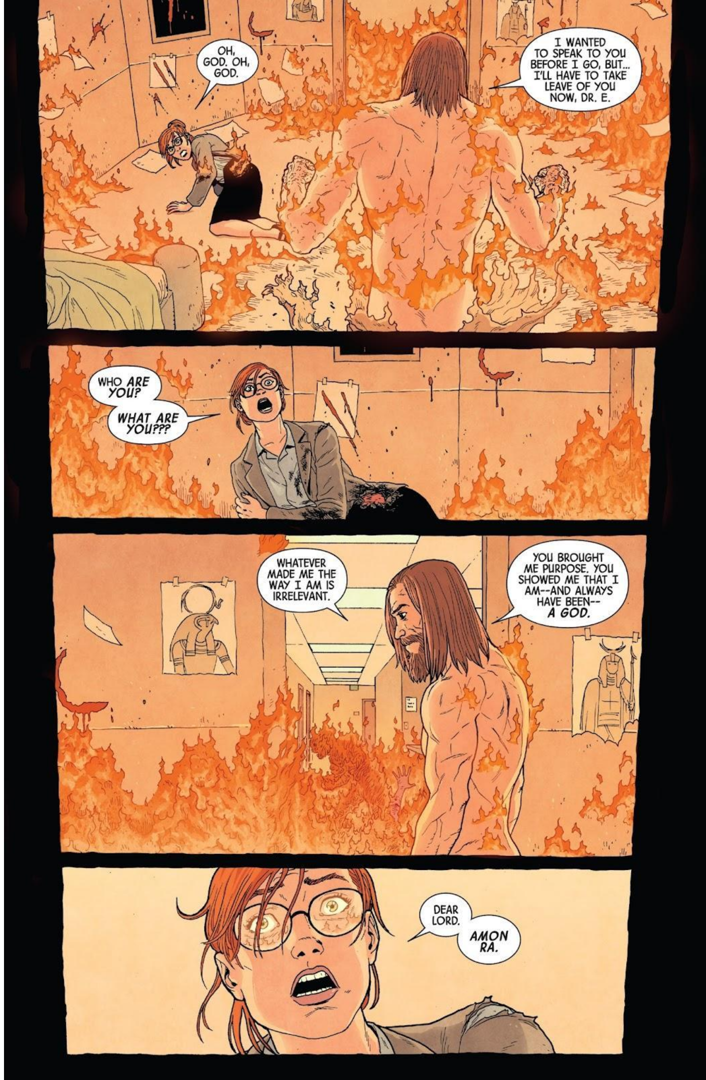

I REALIZE THAT AS TRANQUIL AS MY PATIENT APPEARS, I'LL NEED TO TURN TO OTHERS TO DIG FOR THE TRUTH OF HIS PAST.
ARTMENT OF
ETERAN
FFAIRS
AL FACILITY
THE MILITARY HOSPITAL THAT TRANSFERRED HIM TO OUR CARE.
BUT IT SEEMS LIKE I CAN'T UNEARTH ANYTHING THAT MAKES SENSE.
I DON'T SAY THIS A LOT ABOUT MULTIPLE MURDERERS, BUT...
IF YOU'RE ASKING WHAT I THOUGHT OF THE MAN, I'D HAVE TO ADMIT HE BROUGHT NOTHING BUT WARMTH TO THIS PLACE.
TRUST ME, I KNOW. HIS EAGERNESS TO LEARN TO HEAL HIMSELF...
I WISH WE COULD HAVE KEPT HIM, BUT SINCE IT WAS DISCOVERED HE JOINED UNDER A FORGED ALIAS, WE COULDN'T OFFICIALLY...
LOOK, I'VE TREATED KILLERS BEFORE.
I'VE SEEN MORE INCIDENTS OF BULLYING, PTSD, AND THE UGLY SIDE OF BIPOLAR THAN ONE CAN COUNT.
WE AREN'T SUPPOSED TO ADMIT THIS, BUT AS A FELLOW DOCTOR...
...ANYONE WOULD HAVE HURT THOSE BASTARDS FOR ALL THEY DID.


MA'AM!
DOCTOR!
WAIT!
YOU'RE HERE ABOUT THE NAMELESS ONE, AREN'T YOU?
YES, I AM, BUT I'M AFRAID I MUST--
LISTEN. THEY WON'T BELIEVE ME.
BUT I WAS SERVING OVER THERE AT THE TIME.
WE ALL KNOW THE TRUTH. IT WAS IMPOSSIBLE.
THEY HAD HIM TIED UP. NAKED.
HOW COULD HE HAVE POSSIBLY STARTED THAT FIRE?
NO MATCHES, NO LIGHTER. I KNOW WHAT HE--
OKAY, BUDDY. LET'S LEAVE THE NICE LADY ALONE.
IF YOU'RE NOT AFRAID, YOU SHOULD BE!
BE AFRAID!
DING
NURSE PHILLIPS
EMERGENCY. DR. EMMETT.
RAVENCROFT.
NOW.

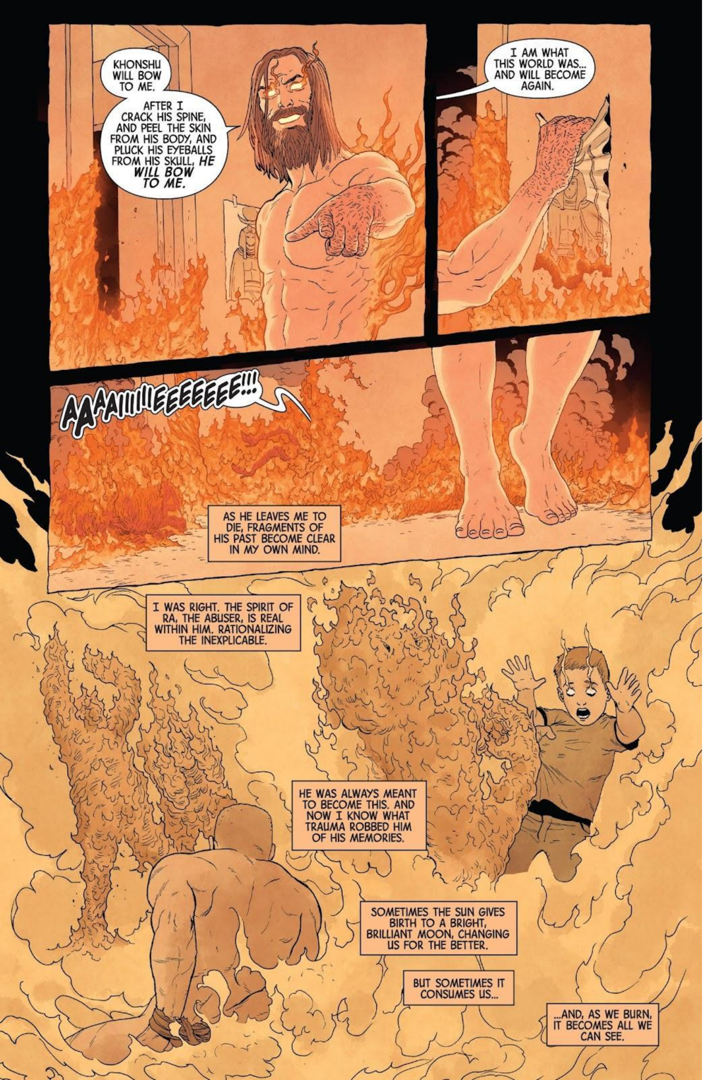

HOW COULD THIS BE? WAS IT ALL FOR NOTHING?
AS A DOCTOR, I BELIEVED I COULD MAKE A DIFFERENCE. BUT AGAIN, I AM JUST AT THE WHIM OF THE RAW, ELEMENTAL POWER OF INSANITY.
WE FOUND HIM LIKE THIS AND IMMEDIATELY RESTRAINED HIM.
SO NOBODY ELSE BESIDES NURSE HAYWORTH COULD BE HURT. ALSO...
THERE WAS NO OTHER WAY TO RETRIEVE HER NOSE.
THIS IS...
THIS IS HEARTBREAKING. HOW DID THIS HAPPEN...
WHY, DAMMIT?!
WHEN I REVEALED MYSELF TO HER...
...SHE DIDN'T BELIEVE.


REVEALED WHO? WHO ARE YOU, REALLY, UNDER ALL THAT BLOOD?
I THOUGHT I KNEW. A COMPASSIONATE, CONFUSED GUY.
STRICKEN WITH A DISEASE AND AN UPBRINGING HE DIDN'T DESERVE.
SO, IF NOT, WHO ARE YOU?
YOU OF ALL PEOPLE SHOULD KNOW. MY TEACHER.
CALL ME BY MY NAME.
SAY IT.
K-KHONSHU.
KHONSHU IS NOTHING NEXT TO ME.

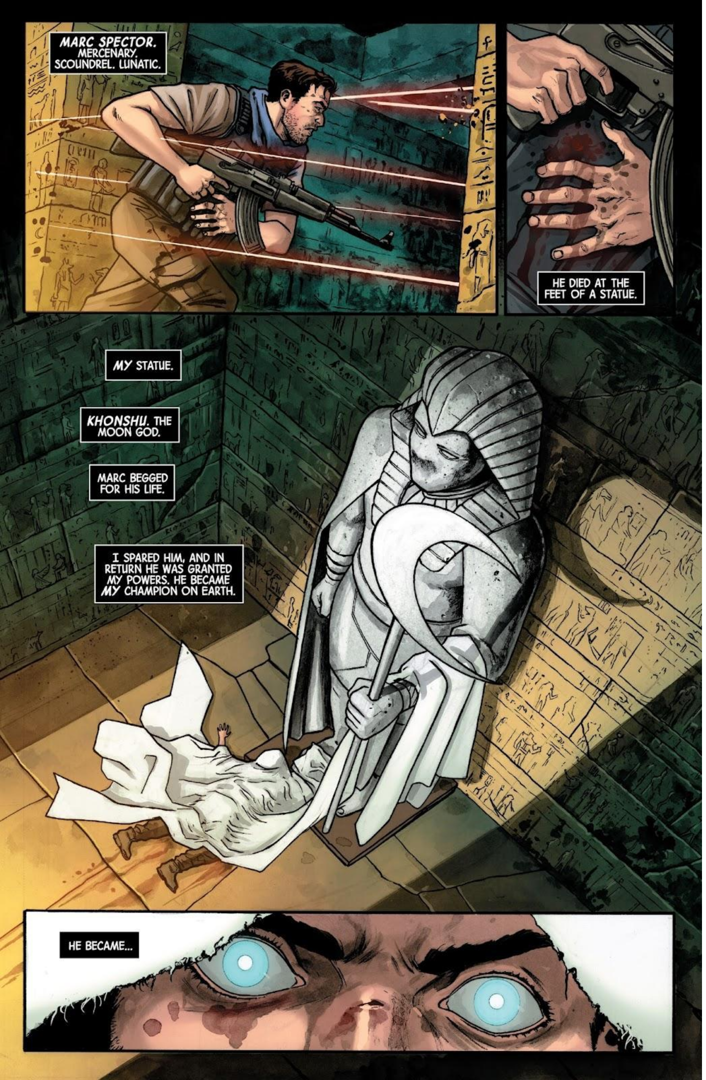




OH, GOD. OH, GOD.
I WANTED TO SPEAK TO YOU BEFORE I GO, BUT... I'LL HAVE TO TAKE LEAVE OF YOU NOW, DR. E.
WHO *ARE YOU?*
WHAT ARE YOU???
WHATEVER MADE ME THE WAY I AM IS IRRELEVANT.
YOU BROUGHT ME PURPOSE. YOU SHOWED ME THAT I AM--AND ALWAYS HAVE BEEN-- *A GOD.*
DEAR LORD.
AMON RA.


KHONSHU WILL BOW TO ME.
AFTER I CRACK HIS SPINE, AND PEEL THE SKIN FROM HIS BODY, AND PLUCK HIS EYEBALLS FROM HIS SKULL, HE WILL BOW TO ME.
I AM WHAT THIS WORLD WAS... AND WILL BECOME AGAIN.
AAAIIIIIEEEEEEE!!!
AS HE LEAVES ME TO DIE, FRAGMENTS OF HIS PAST BECOME CLEAR IN MY OWN MIND.
I WAS RIGHT. THE SPIRIT OF RA, THE ABUSER, IS REAL WITHIN HIM. RATIONALIZING THE INEXPLICABLE.
HE WAS ALWAYS MEANT TO BECOME THIS. AND NOW I KNOW WHAT TRAUMA ROBBED HIM OF HIS MEMORIES.
SOMETIMES THE SUN GIVES BIRTH TO A BRIGHT, BRILLIANT MOON, CHANGING US FOR THE BETTER.
BUT SOMETIMES IT CONSUMES US...
...AND, AS WE BURN, IT BECOMES ALL WE CAN SEE.


A SURVIVOR?
THAT'S A MIRACLE.
DOCTOR, IF THIS IS A MIRACLE, THEN I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO BELIEVE ANYMORE.
MA'AM... LISTEN.
WE'RE GOING TO GET YOU OUT OF HERE...BUT YOU'RE GOING TO HAVE TO HOLD ON FOR ME.
SUPPORT! NOW! NOW!
I NEED THIS LADY IN A TRUCK YESTERDAY!
GET HER OUT OF HERE!
CAN YOU TRY SPEAKING FOR ME? CAN YOU BREATHE?
I BELIEVE.
WHAT WAS THAT?
FIRE
I SAID I BELIEVE. I BELIEVE.
I BELIEEEEEVVVVEHAHAHAHHAHAHAAHAHAHAHAHA
AHAHAHAHAHAHAHAH
IT BEGINS.


MARC SPECTOR. MERCENARY. SCOUNDREL. LUNATIC.
HE DIED AT THE FEET OF A STATUE.
MY STATUE.
KHONSHU. THE MOON GOD.
MARC BEGGED FOR HIS LIFE.
I SPARED HIM, AND IN RETURN HE WAS GRANTED MY POWERS. HE BECAME MY CHAMPION ON EARTH.
HE BECAME...


...A HERO.
HE USED MY POWERS TO FIGHT CRIME.
TO FIND REDEMPTION.
IT ONLY COST HIM HIS MIND.
YOU SEE, CRIMINALS AREN'T THE ONLY THING MARC SPECTOR FIGHTS. HE ALSO FIGHTS...



MOON KNIGHT

Writing MOON KNIGHT (not "a book like MOON KNIGHT" or "writing such a huge project for Marvel"… WRITING MOON KNIGHT) is a dream come true. I couldn't pick a better place in the Marvel U to inject my passion into, and it is the pinnacle of everything I've worked towards as a writer.

Anyone who treats a super hero comic as an easy paycheck needs to check themselves and realize why they're our most prevalent modern myths. Thank YOU (and my fam at Marvel) for letting me write this, supporting my previous work, and allowing me to make comics with someone as esteemed and talented as Jacen.

I only ask that if you enjoyed this somewhat bizarre issue, keep reading this book. I want to enjoy it WITH you. Maybe we can claw away at something horrible together.

It will not, however, be pretty.

Thanks,

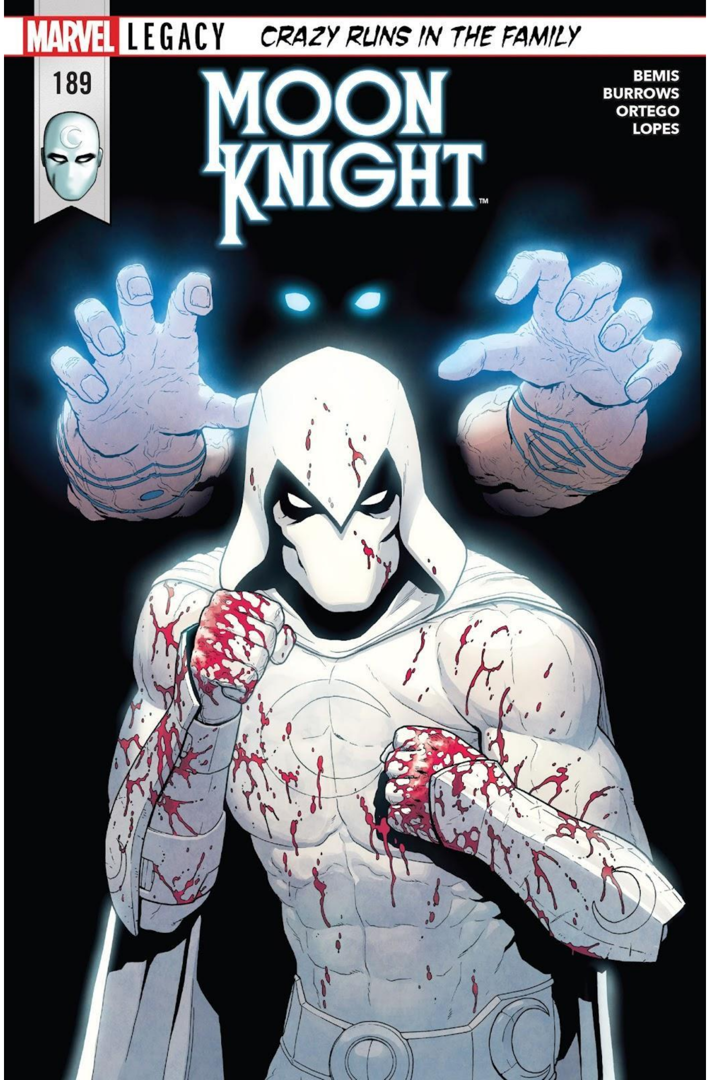
Max Bemis
Philadelphia
Fall 2017

Max and I are really striving to put something together that is unique and interesting while drawing from Moon Knight's long history. This next chapter in Moon Knight's life is going to permanently affect this character's path and we are working hard live up to the task.

The appeal of the character, for me, is that you can explore a lot of ideas by tapping into different elements of his history, from metaphysical Egyptology to modern day psychological medicine. Moon Knight offers a vast playground of options for a creative team which is why he has always been one of Marvel's more experimental canvases. I couldn't be more excited to be working on a character with such a rich history of artists and writers pushing boundaries.

Moon Knight has been in a sort of creative renaissance since Warren Ellis and Declan Shalvey relaunched the character in 2014, all the way through the amazing arc recently completed by Jeff Lemire, Greg Smallwood and company, and we hope to continue this by making the next important chapter in Marc Spector's life thought-provoking, intense, a little scary, and a little funny.

Jacen Burrows


MARVEL LEGACY
CRAZY RUNS IN THE FAMILY
189
MOON KNIGHT
BEMIS
BURROWS
ORTEGO
LOPES



Marc Spector. Steven Grant. Jake Lockley. Each a distinct personality of one man vying for control. Spector, the original personality, has asserted his dominance and fights to retain that control. But years ago, as a mercenary, Spector died in Egypt under a statue of the moon god **Khonshu.** In the shadow of the ancient deity, Marc returned to life. From then on, Marc took on a new aspect in honor of Khonshu, dedicating his second life to fighting crime as...

MOON KNIGHT

CRAZY RUNS IN THE FAMILY

PART 2

A mysterious nameless patient was admitted to Ravencroft after committing multiple homicides by fire. Seeking to understand his mental illness, his doctor, using Marc Spector's case as a template, attempted to have her patient see how he too can use the allegory of the gods to better understand his obsession. Where Spector turned to the moon god, the man known as Patient 86 found meaning in Amon Ra, the sun god. He set fire to the asylum with his doctor inside, using nothing but his own body. Patient 86 left, convinced he is the earthly aspect of Amon Ra, and he is very upset at his son, Khonshu.

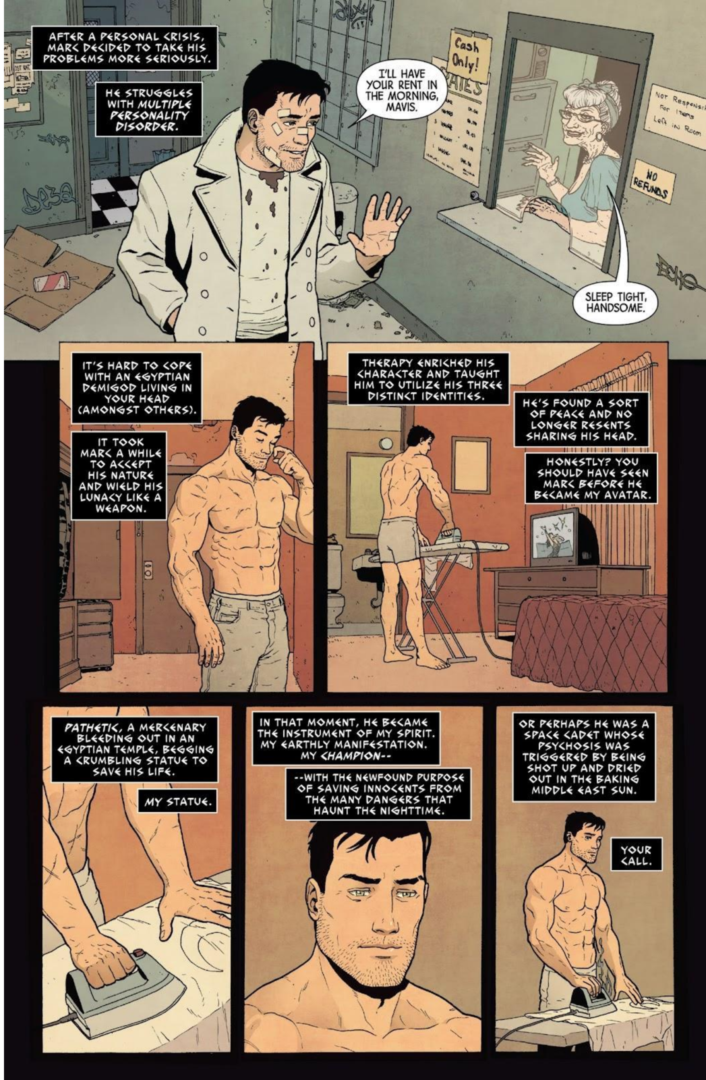
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Letterer **VC's CORY PETIT** · Cover Artists **JACEN BURROWS & MAT LOPES** · Design **NICK RUSSELL**

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Editor in Chief **AXEL ALONSO** · Chief Creative Officer **JOE QUESADA** · President **DAN BUCKLEY** · Executive Producer **ALAN FINE**


MY NAME IS KHONSHU, MOON GOD OF EGYPT.
I'M HERE TO TELL YOU A STORY ABOUT A MAD VIGILANTE NAMED MARC SPECTOR.
OUR TALE FINDS US HERE, ON A STANDARD NIGHT FOR MARC, WHO, WHEN DRESSED IN ALL WHITE AND DONNING A CAPE, REFERS TO HIMSELF AS MOON KNIGHT.
MARC HAS SPENT TEN MINUTES DECORATING THIS BAR WITH THE BLOOD OF THESE DRUG DEALERS AND SLAVERS.
THE CACOPHONY OF SNAPPING COLLARBONES AND PIT-PATTERING PLASMA IS LIKE WHALE SONG TO HIM.
AS THE THUD OF A MAN BEING LITERALLY PUNTED ACROSS THE ROOM SOUNDS, MARC SPECTOR IS GRATEFUL FOR HIS LIFE.
FOR THE PRIVILEGE OF SERVING ME.
KHONSHU, PROTECTOR OF TRAVELERS IN THE NIGHT.
YOU SEE, MARC SPECTOR IS CRAZY.
BUT IN THE CONTEXT OF MY BLESSING, HE IS, WELL...A "SUPER HERO."


AFTER A PERSONAL CRISIS, MARC DECIDED TO TAKE HIS PROBLEMS MORE SERIOUSLY.
HE STRUGGLES WITH MULTIPLE PERSONALITY DISORDER.
Cash Only!
I'LL HAVE YOUR RENT IN THE MORNING, MAVIS.
Not Responsible For Items Left in Room
NO REFUNDS
SLEEP TIGHT, HANDSOME.
IT'S HARD TO COPE WITH AN EGYPTIAN DEMIGOD LIVING IN YOUR HEAD (AMONGST OTHERS).
IT TOOK MARC A WHILE TO ACCEPT HIS NATURE AND WIELD HIS LUNACY LIKE A WEAPON.
THERAPY ENRICHED HIS CHARACTER AND TAUGHT HIM TO UTILIZE HIS THREE DISTINCT IDENTITIES.
HE'S FOUND A SORT OF PEACE AND NO LONGER RESENTS SHARING HIS HEAD.
HONESTLY? YOU SHOULD HAVE SEEN MARC BEFORE HE BECAME MY AVATAR.
PATHETIC, A MERCENARY BLEEDING OUT IN AN EGYPTIAN TEMPLE, BEGGING A CRUMBLING STATUE TO SAVE HIS LIFE.
MY STATUE.
IN THAT MOMENT, HE BECAME THE INSTRUMENT OF MY SPIRIT. MY EARTHLY MANIFESTATION. MY CHAMPION--
--WITH THE NEWFOUND PURPOSE OF SAVING INNOCENTS FROM THE MANY DANGERS THAT HAUNT THE NIGHTTIME.
OR PERHAPS HE WAS A SPACE CADET WHOSE PSYCHOSIS WAS TRIGGERED BY BEING SHOT UP AND DRIED OUT IN THE BAKING MIDDLE EAST SUN.
YOUR CALL.



IT IS NOW MORNING.
MARC IS READY TO BECOME SOMEONE ELSE.
TODAY, MARC TAKES ON THE FORM OF STEVEN GRANT, WEALTHY AND STYLISH INVESTOR AND ENTREPRENEUR.
LOOKING GOOD, STEVEN.
THANKS, KHONSHU.
STEVEN GRANT IS A GOOD MAN.
THOUGH NARCISSISTIC AND DECADENT, HE MANIPULATES THE SYSTEM TO BENEFIT THE DISENFRANCHISED.
STEVEN GRANT AND MARC SPECTOR SHARE A MUTUAL ADMIRATION.
I FIND HIM TO BE A TOLERABLE ANNOYANCE.
BUT ANYTHING IS BETTER THAN...THE OTHER GUY.
WE'LL AVOID DISCUSSING HIM FOR NOW.
BESIDES... SOMETHING DREADFUL IS AFOOT.



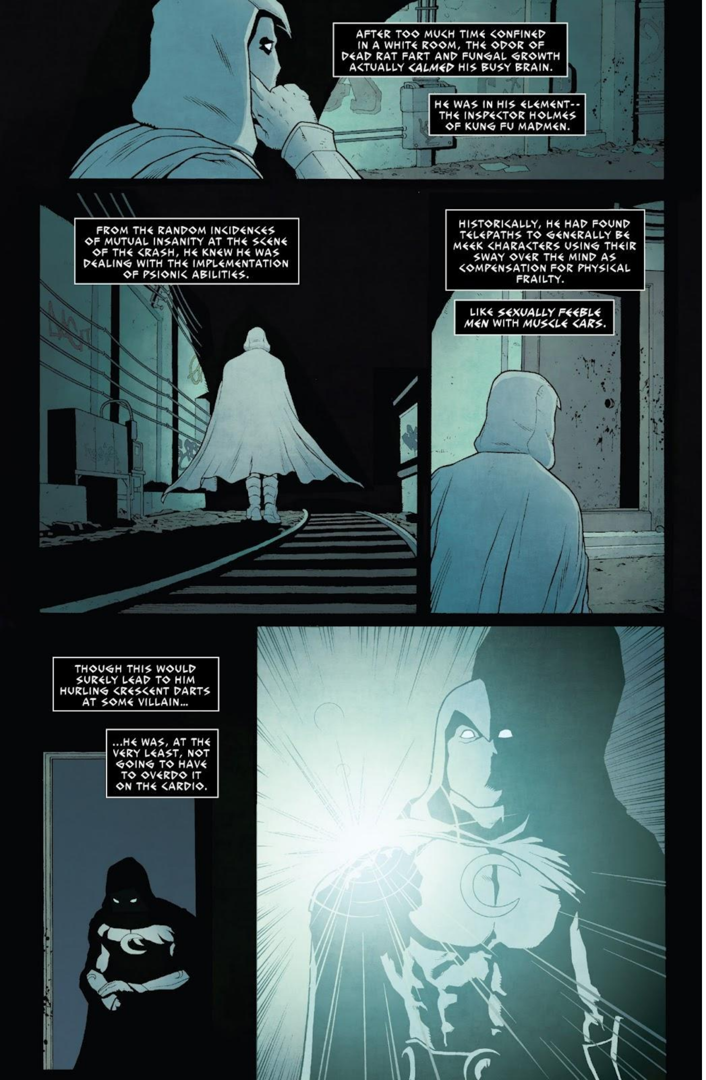
FINE. YOU CAME TO THE MAN WHO KNOWS EVERYONE.
BUT ONLY BECAUSE I OWE YA...
HEAD TO THE PARK AT MIDNIGHT. NEAR HARLEM.
FIND YERSELF A GIRL NAMED CHRIS...
Sex 4 Snacks
YEAH, I'VE MET THE GUY. UNFORTUNATELY.
I...DISTRIBUTED FOR HIM FOR A COUPLE OF WEEKS. STILL KINDA CREEPED OUT, HONESTLY.
HE GOES BY "THE LIVING DEATH," SET UP SHOP IN THE BRONX.
TO THE @#$% ARMED FORCES.
AND SOBRIETY.
MYRA'S UNDER THE GUY'S THUMB.
BUT MYRA DON'T DO NOTHIN' FOR FREE. ESPECIALLY TALK.
THAT'S THE PLACE.
TAKE THE M TO SAVE A FEW MINUTES, HONEY.
TOP FLOOR. JUST LIKE YOU'D GUESS. PSSHHH.
BUT YOU BEST KNOW SOMEONE WHO KNOWS SOMEONE, YO.


NOT EVEN A LENGTHY ABSENCE COULD PUT A DENT IN STEVEN GRANT'S PORTFOLIO.
WHICH MEANS YOU'VE DOUBLED YOUR WEALTH AND OUR NET WORTH FROM A YACHT IN THE CAYMAN ISLANDS, EVEN WITHOUT CELL SERVICE.
IT'S UNPRECEDENTED. WE COULDN'T HAVE DONE THIS WITHOUT YOU.
AS OF TODAY, WE WENT FROM POTENTIALITY TO REALIZATION. WE'RE NOT JUST RICH, WE'RE 2017 RICH.
YOU ENIGMATIC @#$% GENIUS.
YOU'RE SURE ABOUT THIS?
DIVERTING YOUR ENTIRE SLICE OF THE PIE TO THIS LUNAR LIVES FUND OF YOURS?
YOU'VE PROBABLY PUT A SANDWICH IN THE HAND OF HALF THE DISPLACED YOUTH IN NEW YORK CITY BY NOW, STEVEN.
DON'T YOU DESERVE A LITTLE, YOURSELF?
HOLDING ONTO MONEY IS BORING, FRED.
I GET MY KICKS FROM THROWING IT AROUND WHERE IT DOESN'T BELONG.


...REPORTS SAY THAT IT WAS A CONDUCTOR'S SUICIDE THAT INSTIGATED THE COLLISION, NOW A SCENE OF GORE AND DESTRUCTION.
THE GHASTLY SCENE IS WORSENED BY THE BIZARRE BEHAVIOR OF THE SURVIVORS.
SELF-MUTILATION AND VIOLENT BEHAVIOR ABOUND, TURNING A TENSE SITUATION INTO CHAOS AS AID WORKERS FLOOD THE SCENE.
NEW YORK, ALL WE CAN DO IS HOPE THAT THIS INSANITY HAS AN EXPLANATION.
THERE'S ALWAYS AN EXPLANATION.
'SRIGHT, GRANT. SSSALWAYS AN ESSPERATION.
I'VE GOT TO GO, McALLISTER. CALL YOUR SPONSOR.
AND SO HE SOARS INTO THE GAPING MAW OF THE NIGHT.


YOU LOST, BEE GEE OF NAZARETH?
YOU, FRIEND, ARE THE ONE WHO IS LOST.
I'M HERE TO SEE THE MAN WHO ACTS AS RULER OF THIS BUILDING.
DON'T KNOW WHY YOU THINK YOU CAN TOUCH ME, BUT YOU NEED AN ESCORT TO SEE HIM.
AND NOTHIN' IS REALLY TEMPTING ME TO VOUCH FOR YOU.
PLEASE.
I DON'T WANT TO HAVE TO BURN YOU.
DAMN, FELLAS. WE SHOULD BE SELLING WHAT THIS GUY'S ON! HA!
WHAT THE--AH!
AHHHH! AAGHHHHHHH!!!!!!
TOLD YOU.


QUITE FAMILIAR WITH ALL THE THINGS THAT MAKE MEN WEEP AND SOIL THEMSELVES, MARC SPECTOR FELT AT HOME IN THESE DERELICT TUNNELS.


AFTER TOO MUCH TIME CONFINED IN A WHITE ROOM, THE ODOR OF DEAD RAT FART AND FUNGAL GROWTH ACTUALLY CALMED HIS BUSY BRAIN.
HE WAS IN HIS ELEMENT-- THE INSPECTOR HOLMES OF KUNG FU MADMEN.
FROM THE RANDOM INCIDENCES OF MUTUAL INSANITY AT THE SCENE OF THE CRASH, HE KNEW HE WAS DEALING WITH THE IMPLEMENTATION OF PSIONIC ABILITIES.
HISTORICALLY, HE HAD FOUND TELEPATHS TO GENERALLY BE MEEK CHARACTERS USING THEIR SWAY OVER THE MIND AS COMPENSATION FOR PHYSICAL FRAILTY.
LIKE SEXUALLY FEEBLE MEN WITH MUSCLE CARS.
THOUGH THIS WOULD SURELY LEAD TO HIM HURLING CRESCENT DARTS AT SOME VILLAIN...
...HE WAS, AT THE VERY LEAST, NOT GOING TO HAVE TO OVERDO IT ON THE CARDIO.


...MARC SPECTOR CAN BE OVERLY CONFIDENT.
CAPITALISM IS A MURDER MACHINE. PUNK IS DEAD.
A KISS IS A SHARED SYRINGE.
WE CANNOT GRASP THE TRUTH.
TEACHING AMERICAN HISTORY IS A FORM OF ABUSE.
TERRORISTS ARE THE NEW APOSTLES.


HELP ME. HELP ME.
I KILLED MY MOTHER WITH WORRY.
JUST KNOWING ME IS A SICKNESS.
DO YOU REALLY THINK THAT?
OR ARE YOU JUST SAYING IT BECAUSE *HE* SAYS SO?
YOU.
BEFORE I KNOCK YOU OUT, TELL ME...
DO YOU NEED TO BE CALLED ANYTHING?
YOU MAY ADDRESS ME AS *THE TRUTH.*
AND YOU WON'T SPEAK SO HAUGHTILY ONCE I GET AHOLD OF YOU.


MMMPHH.
MMMPHH.
MMMPHH.
ARGH! *TIRESOME!*
AHKKKK--


OUR HERO'S THOUGHTS DISTORT AS THE MONSTROSITY'S SWOLLEN MITTS CHOKE THE LIFE OUT OF HIM...
UGHH... WON'T LET... YOU...
HHH.
THE DEAD WEIGHT OF AN IMPOSED, HOPELESS REALITY BEGINS TO SMOTHER HIS WILL TO LIVE.
I'M A MAD CIRCUS CLOWN... THIS IS ALL FOR MYSELF.
THERE IS NO MOON GOD. JUST ANOTHER... S-SICK DELUSION--
WHAM
GHH.
I #@$% LOVE IT!
SLICE
YOU GIANT PEST.
WHAM


NOT HAVING A LOT OF LUCK HERE, FELLAS.
KHONSHU'S MORE OF A TALKER AND THIS GUY'S POWER SET IS THE REAL DEAL.
GRANT'S USELESS...
DOUBT THE TRUTH IS LOOKING FOR STOCK TIPS.
I'M GONNA NEED...
ARRRRRRRRRGAHHHHHHHHHHHHH
...DO YOUR WORST, JAKE.
HA.
BEEN TOO LONG.


YOU LIKE TO TOUCH PEOPLE WITHOUT ASKING, DON'T YOU, BOY?
MANAGED TO GET A FEW LICKS IN, SHAKE UP MARC'S DENTURES.
>PSHHHW<
YOU SHOULD FEEL *LUCKY.*
UGH!
YOU WANT TO STEP INTO *JAKE LOCKLEY'S* MIND, YOU GIGANTIC FREAK?
I @#$% DARE YOU.
YOU MET MARC. MARC'S DISTURBED AS HELL.
NOW IMAGINE THAT HE TOOK ALL THE WORST PARTS OF HIMSELF AND LET THEM FUSE INTO A LIVING PERSON.
NOW, GO AHEAD. TASTE *MY* TRUTH, YOU *LEECH.*
YOU'RE NOT ALLOWED TO KILL HIM, JAKE.


AIIIEEEEEEEEE!!!
DEAR GOD. THE THINGS... THE THINGS YOU'VE DONE.
HE HAS NO IDEA... DOES HE?
YOU BLIND HIM TO YOUR FOUL ACTIONS!
I'LL TELL HIM, YOU FOOL! I'LL TELL HIM ABOUT...
THAT'LL BE ENOUGH OUT OF YOU.
BACK TO YOU AT THE STUDIO, SPECTOR.
AAGGGHHH!
SHUNK
SHUNK


UMMMPH.
WHAT WAS HE *TALKING ABOUT,* JAKE?
THIS IS EXACTLY WHAT WE *AGREED NOT TO DO!* WE *WILL* TALK ABOUT THIS LATER!
DAMMIT.
HMMPH.
WELL, WHAT CAN I SAY?
THE TRUTH... *HURTS.*
OH, DEAR.
MARC.
WHAT?
I'M NOT ALWAYS JUST GRIM AND VIOLENT.


HELLO?
I UNDERSTAND YOU'RE NOT USED TO HAVING MEN SPEAK TO YOU OUT OF TURN, SO I WON'T TAKE UP TOO MUCH OF YOUR TIME.
I'LL LEAD WITH THE BASICS.
I WAS PUT ON THIS EARTH TO DESTROY KHONSHU.
AS A MANIFESTATION OF HIS FATHER, RA, I AM OFFENDED THAT HE CONTINUES TO BREATHE AND SPREAD HIS GOSPEL OF DISSENT THROUGH A FOUL AVATAR.
A *HEBREW,* NO LESS.
I WANT YOUR HELP TO END MARC SPECTOR.
WELL, YOU'RE CERTAINLY INSANE ENOUGH.
BUT I KNOW IT TAKES MORE THAN BLOODLUST TO TAKE DOWN SPECTOR, AND YOU'RE JUST A MAN.
SO MAYBE YOU SHOULD JUST RUN ALONG AND--
FWOOOOSH
HEH.


YOU'VE GOT MY ATTENTION.
NEXT: THE PLAN!


MARVEL LEGACY
CRAZY RUNS IN THE FAMILY
190
MOON KNIGHT
BEMIS
BURROWS
ORTEGO
LOPES

Marc Spector. Steven Grant. Jake Lockley. Each a distinct personality of one man vying for control. Spector, the original personality, has asserted his dominance and fights to retain that control. But years ago, as a mercenary, Spector died in Egypt under a statue of the moon god **Khonshu.** In the shadow of the ancient deity, Marc returned to life. From then on, Marc took on a new aspect in honor of Khonshu, dedicating his second life to fighting crime as...

MOON KNIGHT

CRAZY RUNS IN THE FAMILY

PART 3

Marc Spector has at last achieved some degree of control over his multiple personalities. Well, he thought he had, until a villain who called himself the Truth looked into Jake Lockley's thoughts and saw a secret he'd kept hidden from Marc. Jake rendered the Truth unconscious before Marc could learn what he saw. But secrets aren't the only cloud hanging over Moon Knight's head...

An escaped mental patient with power over fire and a perceived connection with the Egyptian god Ra is coming for Moon Knight, and he's enlisted the help of Marc's old nemesis, Bushman.

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RA SPEAKS THROUGH MY FIRE.
WELL, ERRR... YOU HEARD IT FROM THE MAN HIMSELF.
YOU'VE ALL SEEN WHAT HE CAN DO, SO WHETHER HE'S A DISCIPLE OF THE ONE TRUE GOD OR A BADASS LUNATIC, THE *SUN KING* IS A FORCE TO BE RECKONED WITH.
LOOK. MANY OF YOU HAVE SEEN ME AT MY BEST, AND YOU KNOW THAT'S NOT WHERE I'M AT.
I ONCE RULED AN ENTIRE AFRICAN NATION. MEN LITERALLY BOWED BEFORE ME.
I DEAL CRACK NOW. I MOVE A LOT OF PRODUCT, BUT... YEAH.
I DEAL CRACK AND I EAT LEFTOVERS.
YOU ALL MUST WONDER WHY I HAVEN'T ACTED ON THE PIECE OF INFORMATION I'VE JUST DOLED OUT TO YOU-- MOON KNIGHT'S ONLY REAL WEAKNESS.
AND THAT'S AN ANSWER YOU CAN'T LEARN UNTIL A MAN LITERALLY SLICES YOUR FACE OFF.
MARC SPECTOR...
...SCARES THE *CRAP OUT OF ME.* SIMPLY PUT, I DON'T WANT TO DIE AGAIN.
I WOULDN'T COME NEAR MOON KNIGHT WITH A TEN-FOOT POLE AT THIS POINT. BUT WITH SUN KING'S DETERMINATION AND POWER?
NOW I'M WILLING TO TAKE THE RISK. IT'S TIME TO UTILIZE THE ACE THAT'S BEEN UP MY SLEEVE FOR YEARS. WE'RE GOING TO HIT MARC SPECTOR WHERE IT HURTS THE MOST. HE WILL *NOT* RECOVER FROM THIS.
SO LET'S FINALLY TAKE OUR REVENGE. THIS BLIGHTED ARMY MARCHES UNDER RA'S FLAG.
IF YOU'VE BEEN ASKED HERE, YOU, LIKE ME, KNOW WHAT IT IS TO FACE MOON KNIGHT...

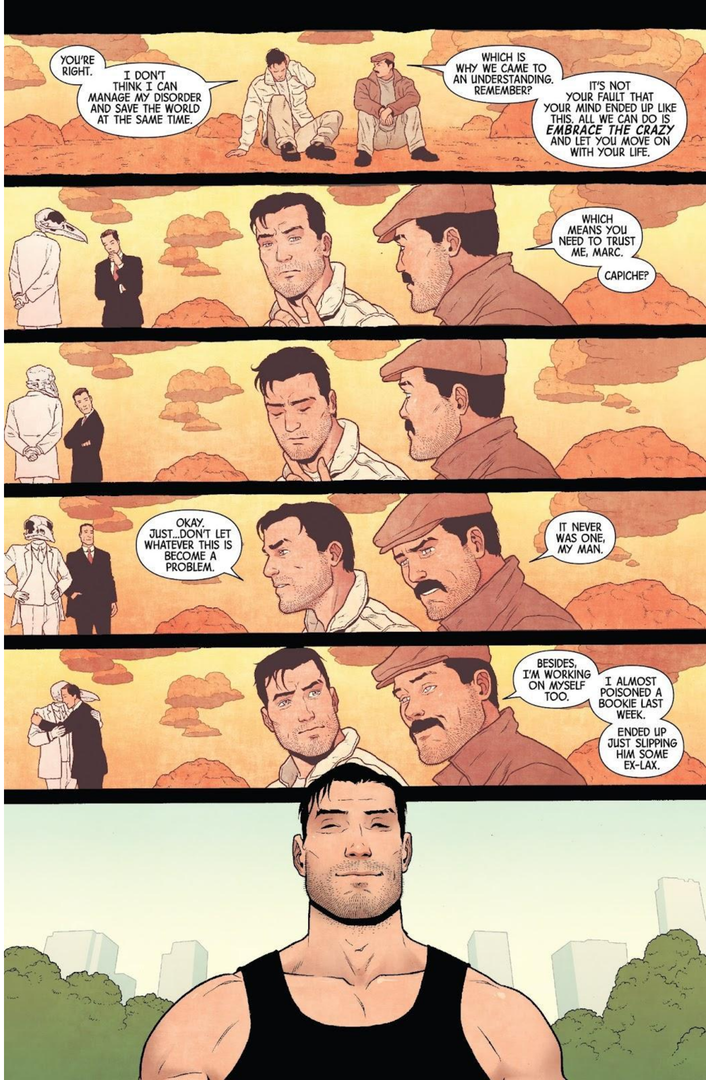


...AND HE WON'T TAKE A PIECE OF US *EVER AGAIN!*

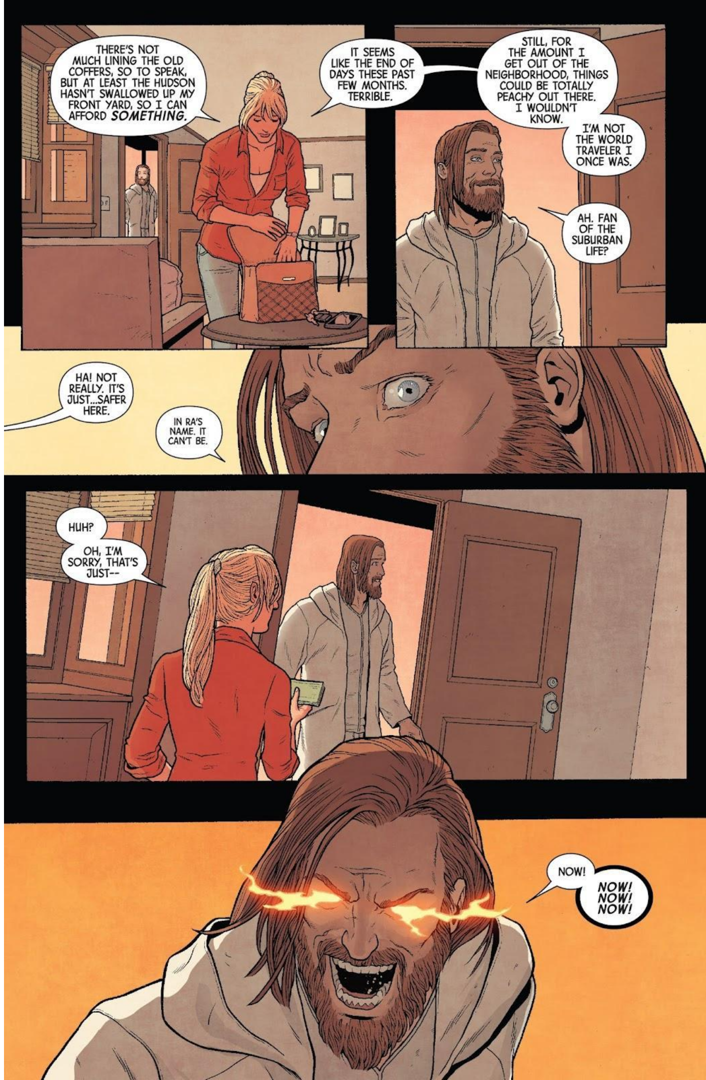

THE INSIDE OF MARC SPECTOR'S HEAD IS A PICTURESQUE, VIOLENT LANDSCAPE TOUCHED BY EGYPTIAN MYTHOLOGY, JUDAIC FOLKLORE AND FRAGMENTS OF HIS PAST.
WHY
ARE YOU
SUCH
A
DOUCHE!!!
BUT IT AIN'T ALWAYS A PRETTY PLACE.
I KNOW YOU ARE, BUT WHAT AM I?
ME!
EXACTLY. SO, SHUT UP.
THE NATURE OF THIS ARRANGEMENT CALLS FOR TRANSPARENCY, JAKE!
KID, YOU SLICED ME OFF YOUR PERSONALITY AND SENT ME TO LIVE AMONG FREAKS, ADDICTS, AND CRIMINALS.
THERE ARE THINGS YOU DON'T WANT TO KNOW.
I KNOW HOW TO STRIP AND DRESS A HUMAN BODY, SPECTOR. THESE THINGS TAKE THEIR TOLL.
THAT'S NOT THE PROBLEM. THE PROBLEM IS THAT TRUTH GOON IMPLYING YOU'RE HIDING SOMETHING BIG FROM ME.
ARE WE ON DRUGS, JAKE?
IF WE WERE ON DRUGS, YOU'D STOP BEING AN ANGSTY TEENAGER AND MELLOW OUT.
AGAIN-- DOUCHE!


I'M NOT A DOUCHE!
YES YOU ARE!
STOP WHACKING ME!
GUYS! YOU'RE NOT GOING TO ACCOMPLISH ANYTHING WITH VIOLENCE!
SHHHH... THAT'S A LOSING ARGUMENT IN THIS PARTICULAR CRANIUM.
IT'S OKAY, STEVEN. JUST BECAUSE THEY'RE FIGHTING DOESN'T MEAN IT'S YOUR FAULT.


ARGH!
LOOK. STEVEN IS THE WEALTHY BENEFACTOR.
KHONSHU IS OUR CONNECTION TO THE BIGGER PICTURE.
YOU'RE THE VOICE OF REASON.
AND I DEAL IN THE GRIMY LEFTOVERS.
YOU *BUILT* US THIS WAY.
LIKE I SAID, YOU CAN CHILL, ***WE GOT THIS.***
PLEASE. DON'T MAKE ME PUT YOU TO SLEEP.


YOU'RE RIGHT.
I DON'T THINK I CAN MANAGE MY DISORDER AND SAVE THE WORLD AT THE SAME TIME.
WHICH IS WHY WE CAME TO AN UNDERSTANDING. REMEMBER?
IT'S NOT YOUR FAULT THAT YOUR MIND ENDED UP LIKE THIS. ALL WE CAN DO IS ***EMBRACE THE CRAZY*** AND LET YOU MOVE ON WITH YOUR LIFE.
WHICH MEANS YOU NEED TO TRUST ME, MARC.
CAPICHE?
OKAY. JUST...DON'T LET WHATEVER THIS IS BECOME A PROBLEM.
IT NEVER WAS ONE, MY MAN.
BESIDES, I'M WORKING ON MYSELF TOO.
I ALMOST POISONED A BOOKIE LAST WEEK.
ENDED UP JUST SLIPPING HIM SOME EX-LAX.


HOW CAN I HELP YOU?
HELLO, MS. ALRAUNE, I HATE IMPOSING, BUT DOOR TO DOOR, LOOKING PEOPLE IN THE EYE, SEEMS TO HAVE HAD THE BEST RESULTS.
I'M TAKING DONATIONS FOR A JOINT DISASTER RELIEF FUND.
I'M SURE YOU'RE AWARE OF THE--
OF COURSE I'M AWARE. SORRY FOR THE COLD OPENING. EVEN WESTCHESTER HAS ITS FAIR SHARE OF CREEPS.
AND YOU CAN CALL ME MARLENE.
OF COURSE. MARLENE.
BEAUTIFUL.
RIIIIIGGHHT.
I'LL JUST GRAB MY CHECKBOOK.

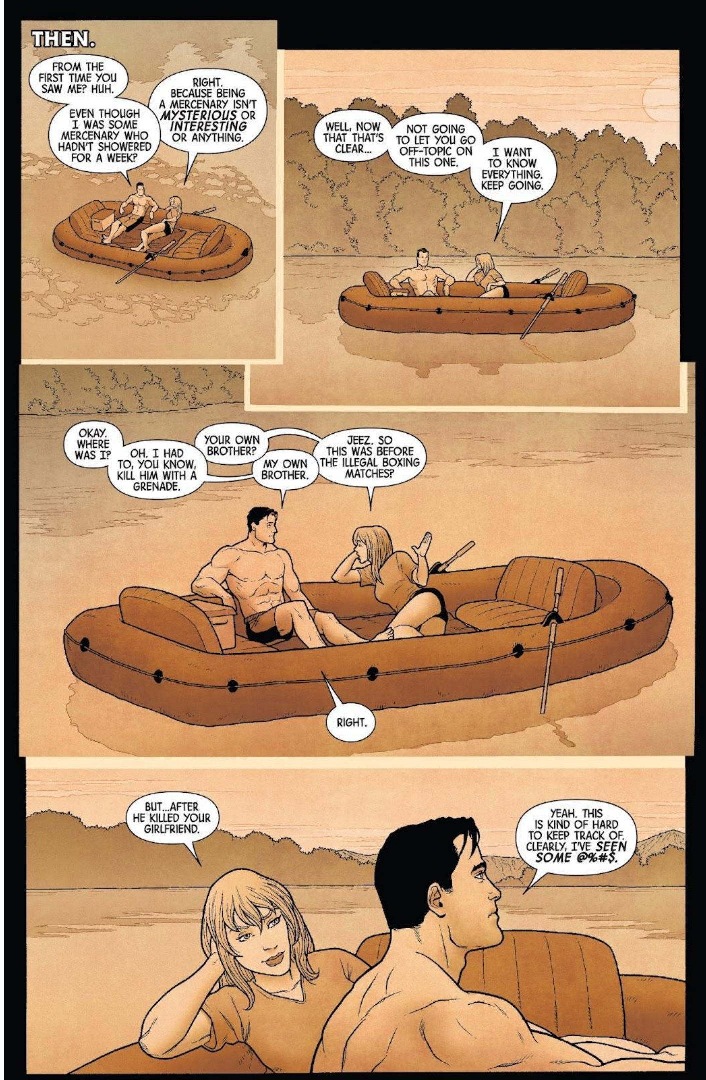

THERE'S NOT MUCH LINING THE OLD COFFERS, SO TO SPEAK, BUT AT LEAST THE HUDSON HASN'T SWALLOWED UP MY FRONT YARD, SO I CAN AFFORD SOMETHING.
IT SEEMS LIKE THE END OF DAYS THESE PAST FEW MONTHS. TERRIBLE.
STILL, FOR THE AMOUNT I GET OUT OF THE NEIGHBORHOOD, THINGS COULD BE TOTALLY PEACHY OUT THERE. I WOULDN'T KNOW.
I'M NOT THE WORLD TRAVELER I ONCE WAS.
AH. FAN OF THE SUBURBAN LIFE?
HA! NOT REALLY. IT'S JUST...SAFER HERE.
IN RA'S NAME. IT CAN'T BE.
HUH?
OH, I'M SORRY, THAT'S JUST--
NOW!
NOW! NOW! NOW!


OH GOD, NO! NO!
MARLENE! SUCH AN INHOSPITABLE WELCOME FOR SUCH AN OLD FRIEND. IT'S BEEN TOO--
BUSHMAN-- CEASE YOUR MONOLOGUE.
LOOK.
WELL, I'LL BE.
DON'T MOVE A @%#$ INCH!
IF YOU LAY A FINGER--
YOU'LL WHAT? DAMSEL-IN-DISTRESS ME TO DEATH?
OR MAYBE YOU'LL CALL THE POLICE?
ORRRR... MAYYYBBBBEEEE...
MAYBE YOU'D LIKE TO SOLICIT SOME ASSISTANCE FROM YOUR KNIGHT IN SHINING ARMOR...

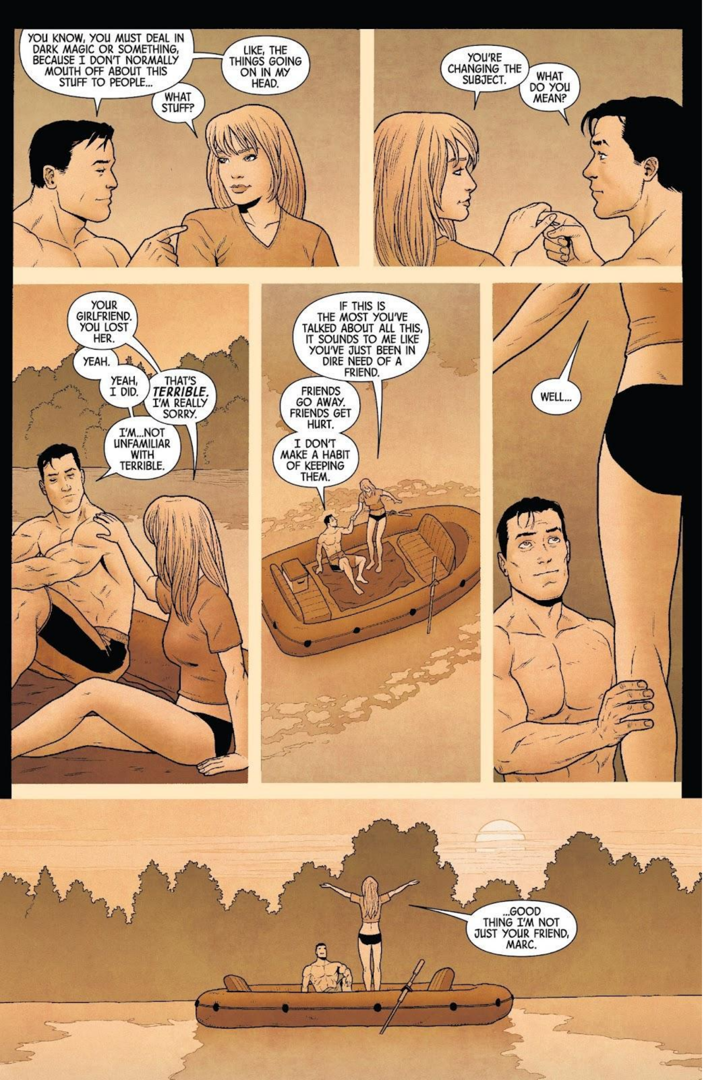

AS SEEN IN THE LAST CHAPTER OF OUR STORY, MARC SPECTOR'S TIME IS A PRECIOUS THING. MOSTLY IT'S EATEN UP BY KUNG FU-ING SOCIETAL DETRITUS.
THIS LEAVES LITTLE TIME FOR PROPER SOCIALIZATION, AND MAY BE THE REASON HE'S BEEN DEEPLY OBSESSED WITH A FORMER LOVER FOR MOST OF HIS LIFE.
TAKE THIS INSTANCE.
MARC IS BUSY TRYING TO FIGURE OUT WHY HE'S ON THE RECEIVING END OF WHAT SEEMS TO BE A RANDOM ATTACK BY DISABLED GENTLEMEN.
STOP THAT.
THIS IS DARK. EVEN FOR ME.
BRIIIING BRIIIING
I HAVE TO TAKE THIS.
DO NOT PICK UP, PSYCHOPATH! LET IT GO!
KHONSHU HELP ME.
MARC, WE TALKED ABOUT THIS.
IT'S NEVER WORKED OUT, EVER, NO MATTER HOW HARD YOU TRY. YOU'RE A DANGER TO HER. HAVE SOME SELF CONTR--
MARLENE!
I CAN'T BELIEVE YOU'RE CALLING!

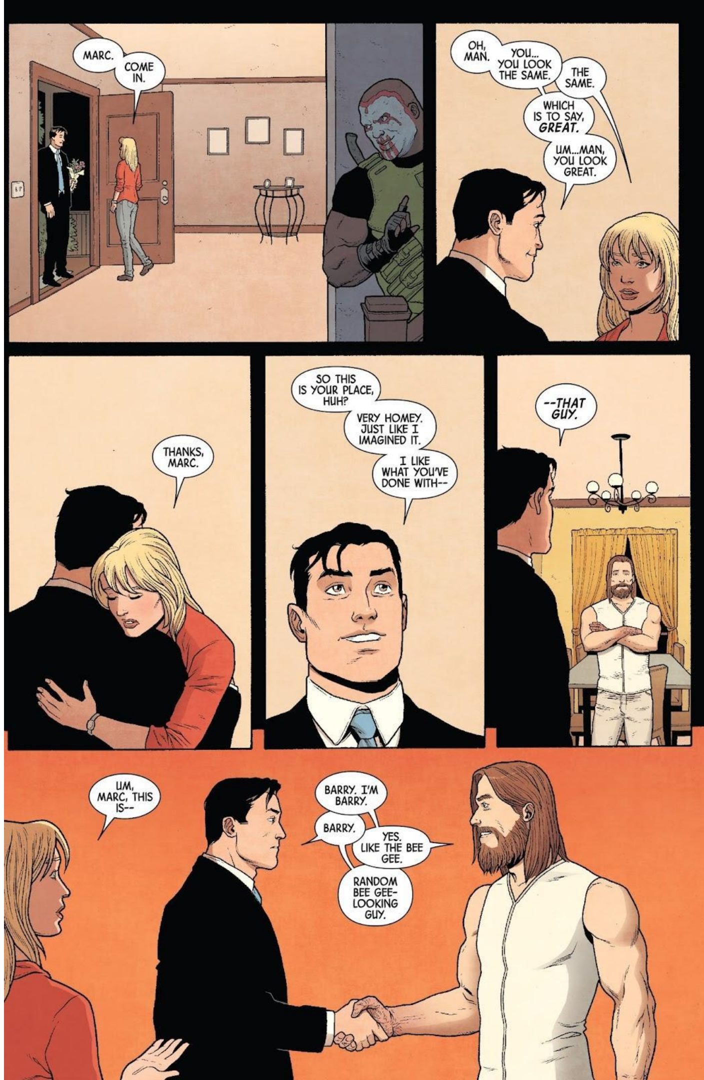


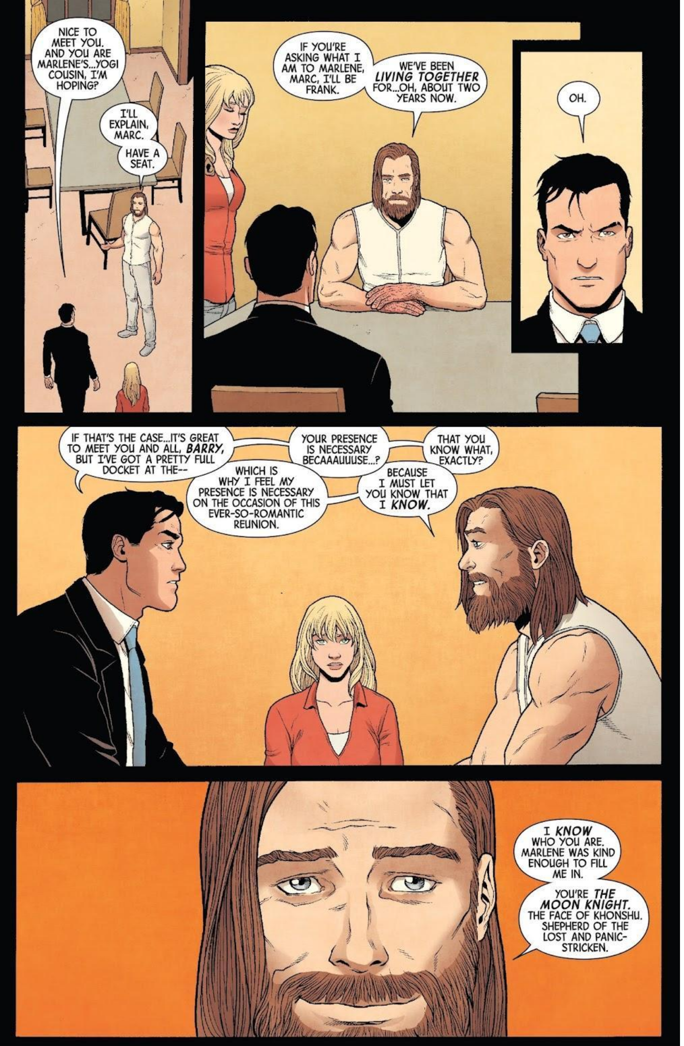
HI, MARC. BEEN A WHILE.
YEARS.
EVERYTHING ALL RIGHT? I THOUGHT WE AGREED IT WOULD BE BEST IF-- YOU KNOW.
I'VE--
I'VE MISSED YOU, TOO.
THAT'S... ACTUALLY WHY I'M CALLING.
WE WERE SOMETHING INCREDIBLY SPECIAL. I KNOW WE'RE... NOT THAT ANYMORE...
BUT I FEEL LIKE I'M LIVING A LIE JUST CUTTING YOU OUT OF MY LIFE TO SAVE MY SKIN.
HOWEVER, I WOULD TOTALLY UNDERSTAND IF YOU NEVER WANTED TO SEE ME AGAIN.
I SHOULD HAVE THOUGHT OF THIS BEFORE I PUSHED YOU AWAY.
MAYBE IT'S BEST IF YOU JUST--
DON'T EVEN THINK ABOUT IT, WOMAN...
I MEAN, YEAH, I'LL TOTALLY GIVE IT SOME THOUGHT.
WOULDN'T WANT TO RUSH INTO ANYTHING.
VROOOOOOOM



THEN.
FROM THE FIRST TIME YOU SAW ME? HUH.
EVEN THOUGH I WAS SOME MERCENARY WHO HADN'T SHOWERED FOR A WEEK?
RIGHT. BECAUSE BEING A MERCENARY ISN'T MYSTERIOUS OR INTERESTING OR ANYTHING.
WELL, NOW THAT THAT'S CLEAR...
NOT GOING TO LET YOU GO OFF-TOPIC ON THIS ONE.
I WANT TO KNOW EVERYTHING. KEEP GOING.
OKAY. WHERE WAS I?
OH. I HAD TO, YOU KNOW, KILL HIM WITH A GRENADE.
YOUR OWN BROTHER?
MY OWN BROTHER.
JEEZ. SO THIS WAS BEFORE THE ILLEGAL BOXING MATCHES?
RIGHT.
BUT...AFTER HE KILLED YOUR GIRLFRIEND.
YEAH. THIS IS KIND OF HARD TO KEEP TRACK OF. CLEARLY, I'VE SEEN SOME @%#$.

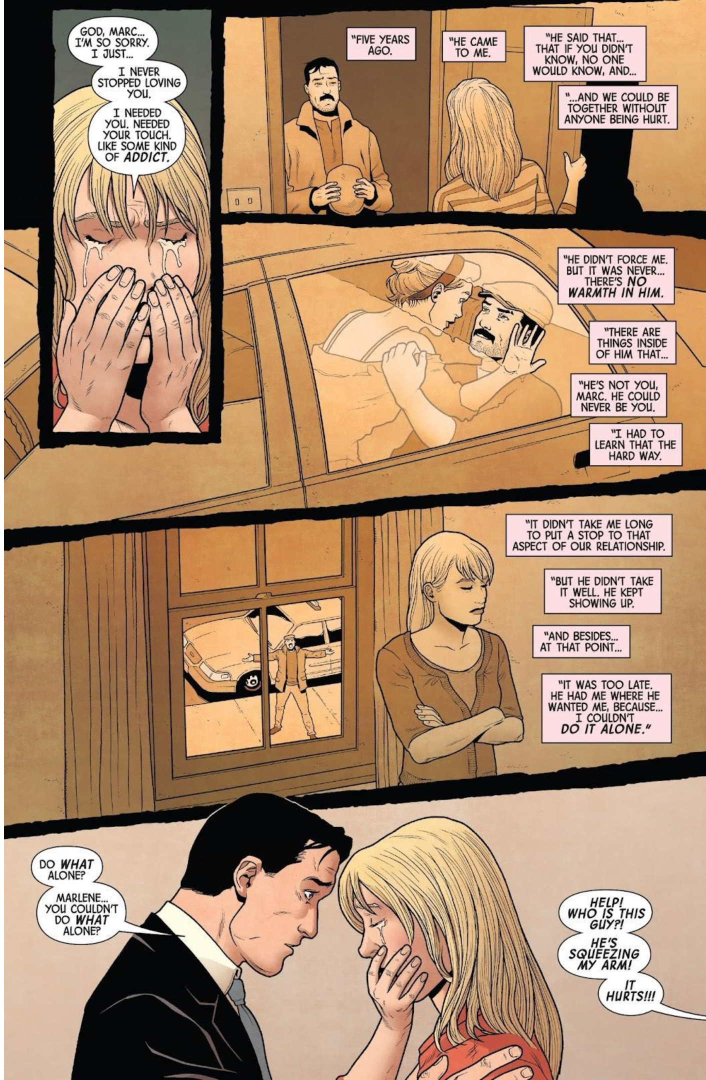

YOU KNOW, YOU MUST DEAL IN DARK MAGIC OR SOMETHING, BECAUSE I DON'T NORMALLY MOUTH OFF ABOUT THIS STUFF TO PEOPLE...
WHAT STUFF?
LIKE, THE THINGS GOING ON IN MY HEAD.
YOU'RE CHANGING THE SUBJECT.
WHAT DO YOU MEAN?
YOUR GIRLFRIEND. YOU LOST HER.
YEAH.
YEAH, I DID.
THAT'S *TERRIBLE.* I'M REALLY SORRY.
I'M...NOT UNFAMILIAR WITH TERRIBLE.
IF THIS IS THE MOST YOU'VE TALKED ABOUT ALL THIS, IT SOUNDS TO ME LIKE YOU'VE JUST BEEN IN DIRE NEED OF A FRIEND.
FRIENDS GO AWAY. FRIENDS GET HURT.
I DON'T MAKE A HABIT OF KEEPING THEM.
WELL...
...GOOD THING I'M NOT JUST YOUR FRIEND, MARC.


MARC.
COME IN.
OH, MAN.
YOU... YOU LOOK THE SAME.
THE SAME.
WHICH IS TO SAY, *GREAT.*
UM...MAN, YOU LOOK GREAT.
THANKS, MARC.
SO THIS IS YOUR PLACE, HUH?
VERY HOMEY. JUST LIKE I IMAGINED IT.
I LIKE WHAT YOU'VE DONE WITH--
--THAT GUY.
UM, MARC, THIS IS--
BARRY. I'M BARRY.
BARRY.
YES. LIKE THE BEE GEE.
RANDOM BEE GEE-LOOKING GUY.


NICE TO MEET YOU. AND YOU ARE MARLENE'S...YOGI COUSIN, I'M HOPING?
I'LL EXPLAIN, MARC.
HAVE A SEAT.
IF YOU'RE ASKING WHAT I AM TO MARLENE, MARC, I'LL BE FRANK.
WE'VE BEEN *LIVING TOGETHER* FOR...OH, ABOUT TWO YEARS NOW.
OH.
IF THAT'S THE CASE...IT'S GREAT TO MEET YOU AND ALL, *BARRY*, BUT I'VE GOT A PRETTY FULL DOCKET AT THE--
WHICH IS WHY I FEEL MY PRESENCE IS NECESSARY ON THE OCCASION OF THIS EVER-SO-ROMANTIC REUNION.
YOUR PRESENCE IS NECESSARY BECAAAUUUSE...?
BECAUSE I MUST LET YOU KNOW THAT I *KNOW*.
THAT YOU KNOW WHAT, EXACTLY?
I *KNOW* WHO YOU ARE. MARLENE WAS KIND ENOUGH TO FILL ME IN.
YOU'RE *THE MOON KNIGHT.* THE FACE OF KHONSHU. SHEPHERD OF THE LOST AND PANIC-STRICKEN.


MARLENE IS A PRECIOUS *DIAMOND,* MARC.
I'M AWARE THAT WHEN YOU WERE IN HER LIFE, SHE WAS CONSTANTLY AT THE MERCY OF MEN WHO WOULD *DESTROY ANYTHING YOU LOVED* JUST TO GIVE YOU AN UNPLEASANT NIGHT'S SLEEP.
YEAH, I'M AWARE OF THAT, BUDDY.
AND, AS A MAN WHO'S SHARED HER LIFE AND HER BED FOR SO MANY SEASONS--
NAUSEOUS.
--I WANT TO MAKE SURE THAT YOU'VE THOUGHT THIS OUT VERY, VERY CAREFULLY.
AND THERE'S SOMETHING ELSE I KNOW.
SOMETHING YOU HAVEN'T THE SLIGHTEST CLUE ABOUT.
I'M NOT THE ONLY ONE TO HAVE TASTED THE BLISS MARLENE HAS AT HER DISPOSAL.
IF YOU WANT TO KNOW WHAT SHE'S *REALLY* BEEN UP TO WHILE YOU'VE BEEN APART, YOU COULD ASK HER YOURSELF.
OR PERHAPS YOU CAN ASK OUR MUTUAL FRIEND...


JAKE
LOCKLEY.
LOCKLEY?
MARLENE, WHAT IS HE--?
DON'T THINK ABOUT IT, MARC.
TURN BACK. TURN BACK NOW.
JAKE, WHAT HAVE YOU DONE?!


GOD, MARC... I'M SO SORRY. I JUST...
I NEVER STOPPED LOVING YOU.
I NEEDED YOU. NEEDED YOUR TOUCH. LIKE SOME KIND OF ADDICT.
"FIVE YEARS AGO.
"HE CAME TO ME.
"HE SAID THAT... THAT IF YOU DIDN'T KNOW, NO ONE WOULD KNOW, AND...
"...AND WE COULD BE TOGETHER WITHOUT ANYONE BEING HURT.
"HE DIDN'T FORCE ME. BUT IT WAS NEVER... THERE'S NO WARMTH IN HIM.
"THERE ARE THINGS INSIDE OF HIM THAT...
"HE'S NOT YOU, MARC. HE COULD NEVER BE YOU.
"I HAD TO LEARN THAT THE HARD WAY.
"IT DIDN'T TAKE ME LONG TO PUT A STOP TO THAT ASPECT OF OUR RELATIONSHIP.
"BUT HE DIDN'T TAKE IT WELL. HE KEPT SHOWING UP.
"AND BESIDES... AT THAT POINT...
"IT WAS TOO LATE. HE HAD ME WHERE HE WANTED ME, BECAUSE... I COULDN'T DO IT ALONE."
DO WHAT ALONE?
MARLENE... YOU COULDN'T DO WHAT ALONE?
HELP! WHO IS THIS GUY?!
HE'S SQUEEZING MY ARM!
IT HURTS!!!


UNCLE JAKE?
SNFFF WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?!
I COULDN'T RAISE OUR DAUGHTER ALONE.
TO BE CONTINUED!



MARVEL LEGACY
CRAZY RUNS IN THE FAMILY
191
MOON KNIGHT
BEMIS
BURROWS
ORTEGO
LOPES


KNOW THIS:
OF THE MANY THAT EXIST, THERE ARE BUT TWO GREAT GODS.
TWO THAT MATTER.
THE FIRST, SPIRITUAL AND ELEMENTAL. A TANGIBLE IDEA.
THE SUM OF ALL THOUGHT, MATTER, TIME, EMOTION. ALL MYTH. INFINITE.
UNKNOWABLE, SAVE BY LOVE ITSELF.
WHEN WE ASK "WHY?" SHE IS THE ANSWER, BUT HER MOTIVES ARE UNKNOWN. WE CAN ONLY BARELY PERCEIVE THAT SHE IS ALL THINGS.
SHE WEEPS FOR US, SHEPHERDING US THROUGH THE VIOLENT BIRTH THAT IS MATERIAL EXISTENCE.
THEN...THERE IS THE OTHER GOD.
THE PSYCHOPATH.
SKIN. TEXT. SOIL. COLD CALCULUS. HE GOVERNS THE EARTH AS ITS CREATOR AND MASTER.
TETHERED TO OUR FLESH, WE CANNOT ESCAPE HIM.
WE NAME HIM "EVIL," BUT HE IS NO FALLEN ANGEL. HE IS THE FATHER HIMSELF. ABOVE US AND BETWEEN US, DIVIDING.
I, KHONSHU, AM BUT A SERVANT TO THAT FORMER, GREATER, MORE ILLUSIVE POWER.
BUT MY FATHER, RA? HE WOULD DOMINATE HER.
TWO GODS STRUGGLING. THE OUTCOME IS UNCERTAIN.
ONLY ONE THING IS CLEAR...


TODAY, THEY ARE AT WAR.

Marc Spector. Steven Grant. Jake Lockley. Each a distinct personality of one man vying for control. Spector, the original personality, has asserted his dominance and fights to retain that control. But years ago, as a mercenary, Spector died in Egypt under a statue of the moon god **Khonshu.** In the shadow of the ancient deity, Marc returned to life. From then on, Marc took on a new aspect in honor of Khonshu, dedicating his second life to fighting crime as…

MOON KNIGHT

CRAZY RUNS IN THE FAMILY

PART 4

An escaped mental patient with power over fire and a perceived connection to the Egyptian sun god Ra is aiming to tear Moon Knight's world apart. Calling himself Sun King, he has enlisted Marc's old nemesis, Bushman, to hit Marc where it really hurts. The first step in their plan: lure Marc out by forcing his former lover, Marlene, to reach out to him.

And all this just when Marc Spector had at last achieved some degree of control over his multiple personalities. Or at least, he thought he had, until he learned that the Jake Lockley personality had secretly maintained an affair with Marlene, and they have a daughter that she's been secretly raising…a daughter now in danger and at Bushman and Sun King's mercy…

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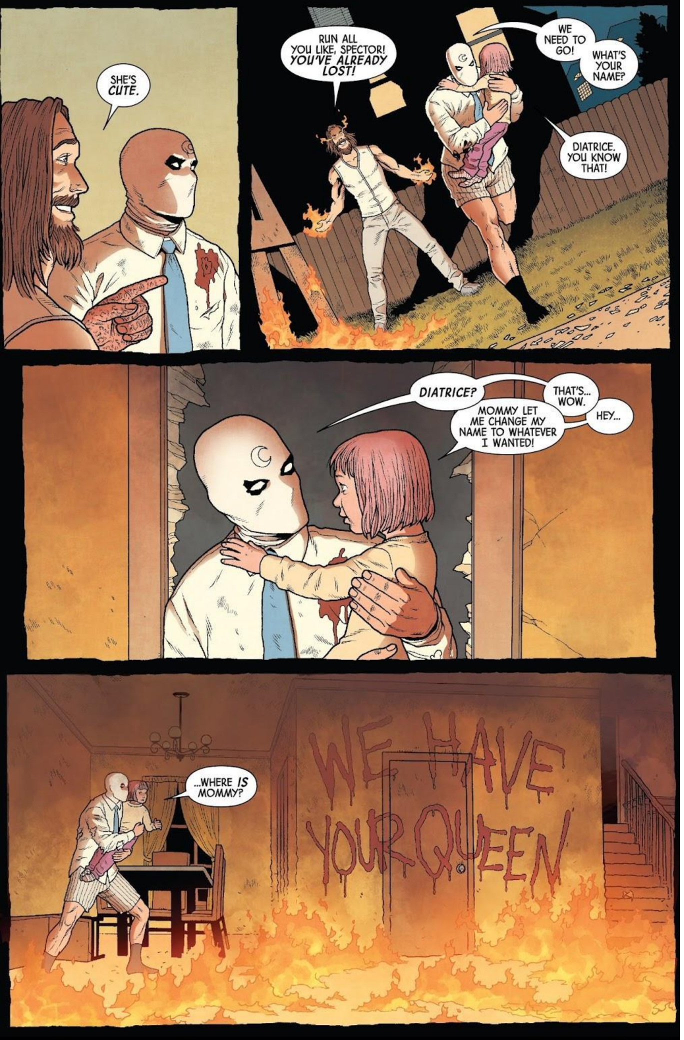


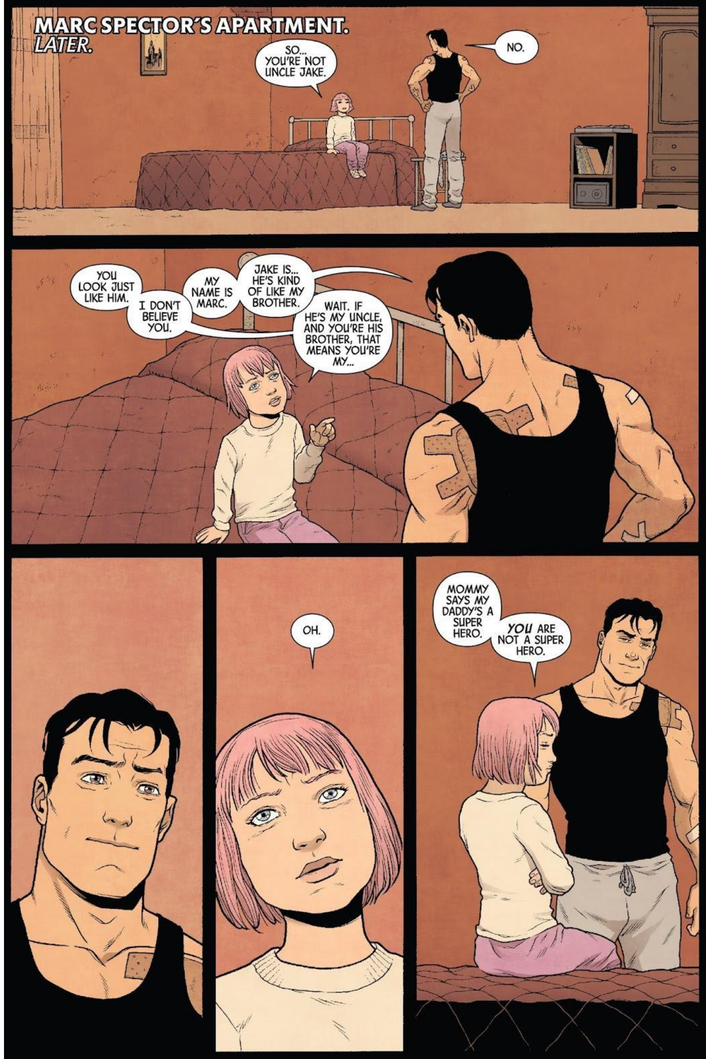

RAOUL.
WHAM
YOU'RE
KRAK
SUCH
A
SLICE
@#$%!!!
SHUNK
%$#@!!!
BLAM
WHAP
DON'T FIGHT, LADY. WE'RE THE TYPE OF GUYS WHO ARE WILLING TO KILL KIDS.
WE GOTTA *PROVE* IT?


SLAM
SPECTOOOORRR!
SO SICK OF YOUR FACE.
BUSHMAN, IF I HAD A FACE LIKE YOURS I'D--
BURN!
YOW!
YOU WANT TO PLAY WITH FIRE?

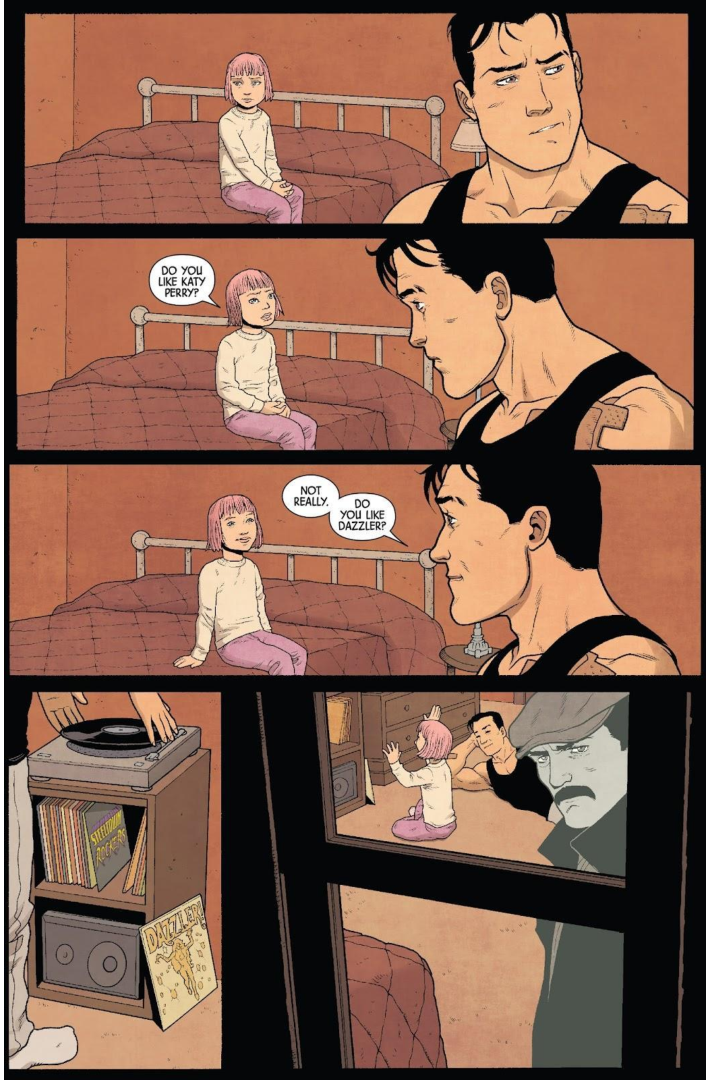

THAT WAS BENEATH YOU, MARC.
THIS BETTER?
GOD, YES.
OOF!


WHAT ARE YOU SUPPOSED TO BE?
I AM RA'S CHOSEN SWORD. HERE TO STRIKE YOU DOWN.
I'M THE SUN KING.
...
OF COURSE YOU ARE.
MY PURPOSE IS TO MAKE YOUR DEATH A MOCKERY. IN FACT, I WOULDN'T BE DOING MY JOB IF I JUST STRUCK YOU DOWN.
IT'S GOTTA BE SO TRAGIC THAT IT MEANS SOMETHING.
TORTURE AND LOSS WILL BE NECESSARY TO COMPLETE THE ALLEGORY. KHONSHU MUST FINALLY FEEL THE WEIGHT OF FAILURE.
I'M NOT ONE OF YOUR THUGS OR CIRCUS FREAKS.
I'VE GOT A GOD IN ME, TOO...
ISN'T THAT WONDERFUL?
HEY!
I WANT TO BE SHY, BUT...
YOU'RE RUINING MY SWINGS!!!


SHE'S *CUTE*.
RUN ALL YOU LIKE, SPECTOR! *YOU'VE ALREADY LOST!*
WE NEED TO GO!
WHAT'S YOUR NAME?
DIATRICE. YOU KNOW THAT!
DIATRICE?
THAT'S... WOW.
MOMMY LET ME CHANGE MY NAME TO WHATEVER I WANTED!
HEY...
...WHERE *IS* MOMMY?
WE HAVE YOUR QUEEN


MARC SPECTOR'S APARTMENT. *LATER.*
SO... YOU'RE NOT UNCLE JAKE.
NO.
JAKE IS... HE'S KIND OF LIKE MY BROTHER.
MY NAME IS MARC.
YOU LOOK JUST LIKE HIM.
I DON'T BELIEVE YOU.
WAIT. IF HE'S MY UNCLE, AND YOU'RE HIS BROTHER, THAT MEANS YOU'RE MY...
OH.
MOMMY SAYS MY DADDY'S A SUPER HERO.
YOU ARE NOT A SUPER HERO.


I KIND OF AM ONE.
YOU ARE NOT.
YOU JUST WEAR A WEIRD SOCK ON YOUR FACE.
YOU DON'T HAVE A SHIELD OR A CAPE OR ANYTHING.
IT WAS AN OFF DAY, OKAY?
I NORMALLY HAVE A CAPE AND... YOU SAW I CAN FLY, RIGHT?
YOU SMELL AND YOU SEEM TIRED.
THE METAL MOON THINGY WAS FLYING. YOU'RE JUST A *HUMAN.*
OKAY, FINE!
LOOK, I'M GOING TO BE LOOKING AFTER YOU FOR A WHILE UNTIL WE CAN FIND YOUR MOM.
BECAUSE THE BAD GUYS TOOK HER?
IS SHE GOING TO *DIE?*
NO! SHE'S NOT GOING TO DIE.
HOW DO YOU *KNOW?*
BECAUSE I'M GOING TO SAVE HER!
HOW?
SO MANY *QUESTIONS.* WE'LL LIE LOW FOR A BIT AND THEN I'M GOING TO SERIOUSLY HURT THOSE BAD GUYS.
THAT'S SCARY.
JEEZ, HE'S REALLY $@&# THIS UP.


DO YOU LIKE KATY PERRY?
NOT REALLY.
DO YOU LIKE DAZZLER?
DAZZLER!


IT'S NOT THAT YOU WORK FOR THE GOVERNMENT, DUDE. IT'S THAT YOUR NAME IS ACTUALLY **NICK.**
CAN'T YOU WEAR SOMETHING STYLIZED? SHADES?
WHY SHOULD I HAVE TO WEAR SUNGLASSES? THAT'S SOME ABLEIST @%#$, MAN.
LOOK, HE DOESN'T HAVE A MONOPOLY ON EYEPATCHES!
DO I TELL YOU YOU'RE NOT ALLOWED TO WORK HERE AND BE BALD?
DUDE, IT'S NOT ABOUT THE EYE, IT'S--
HAHAHAHA!
HEY, AT LEAST FINISH THE HAND LIKE A ***MAN...***
FINISH YOUR OWN HAND, BUDDY.
I'VE GOT WORK TO DO.
BEEP
I NEED YOU TO LISTEN, BECAUSE I'M ONLY GOING TO SAY THIS ONCE, AND WE'VE GOT LESS THAN A MINUTE BEFORE THEY'RE ONTO US.


I'LL GO TO JAIL FOR THIS... BUT IT'S WORTH IT.
SOMEONE DOES ***THIS*** TO A HUMAN BEING... I'M THE BAD GUY?
I'M THE ONE WHO HAD TO GO INTO HIDING.
SCARED SO BAD I HAD TO ABANDON MY LIFE AND DISAPPEAR.
YOU REMEMBER WHEN YOU GET TO THE CITY... YOU'RE DOING THE ***RIGHT THING.***
FOR YOU AND ME AND EVERYONE THAT CAPED WEIRDO HUMILIATED.
AND TELL BUSHMAN I SAID "THANKS."
I'LL MAKE HIM ***BLEED*** FOR YOU, FRIEND.
THE TRUTH IS SO BEAUTIFUL I THINK I'VE FALLEN IN LOVE!
THE TRUTH IS SO UGLY IT'S EATING ME UP!

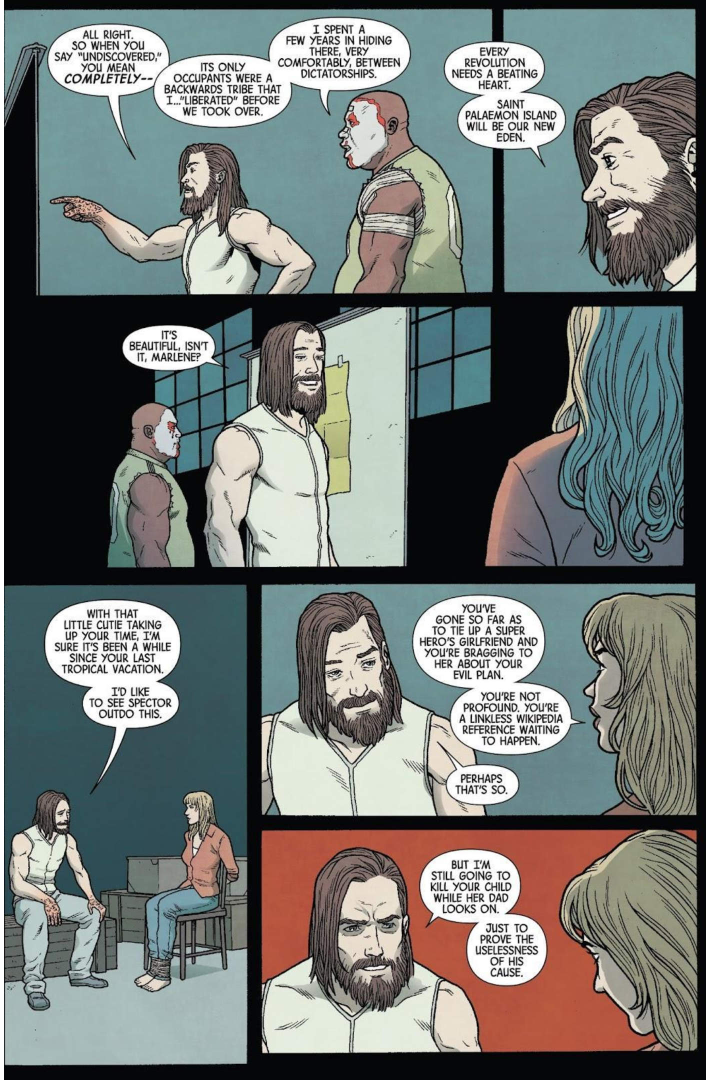


KHONSHU... DON'T YOU BE GIVING ME THAT "CTHULHU" BULL@#%$.
NOT YOU.
HE'S KIND OF RIGHT.
WE CAN'T JUST USE SQUIDS TO EXPLAIN ALL WEIRD THINGS IN THIS WORLD.
STEVEN GRANT, DO NOT CHIDE ME FOR SPEAKING THE TRUTH.
I'M MERELY TRYING TO EXPLAIN RA'S NATURE IN A DIFFERENT CONTEXT.
LORE TELLS US THAT ALL EXISTENCE WAS POPULATED BY PRIMORDIAL BEASTS BEFORE THE ACT OF CREATION.
BUT SCIENTIFICALLY SPEAKING, NOTHING IS CREATED OR DESTROYED.
THOSE CREATURES WHO EMBODIED NOTHINGNESS, THE ABSENCE OF MEANING, AND THUS EVIL...DID NOT DISAPPEAR INTO SOME ALTERNATE DIMENSION.
THEY WERE SIMPLY REBORN IN A DIFFERENT FORM.
OH.
HIM.

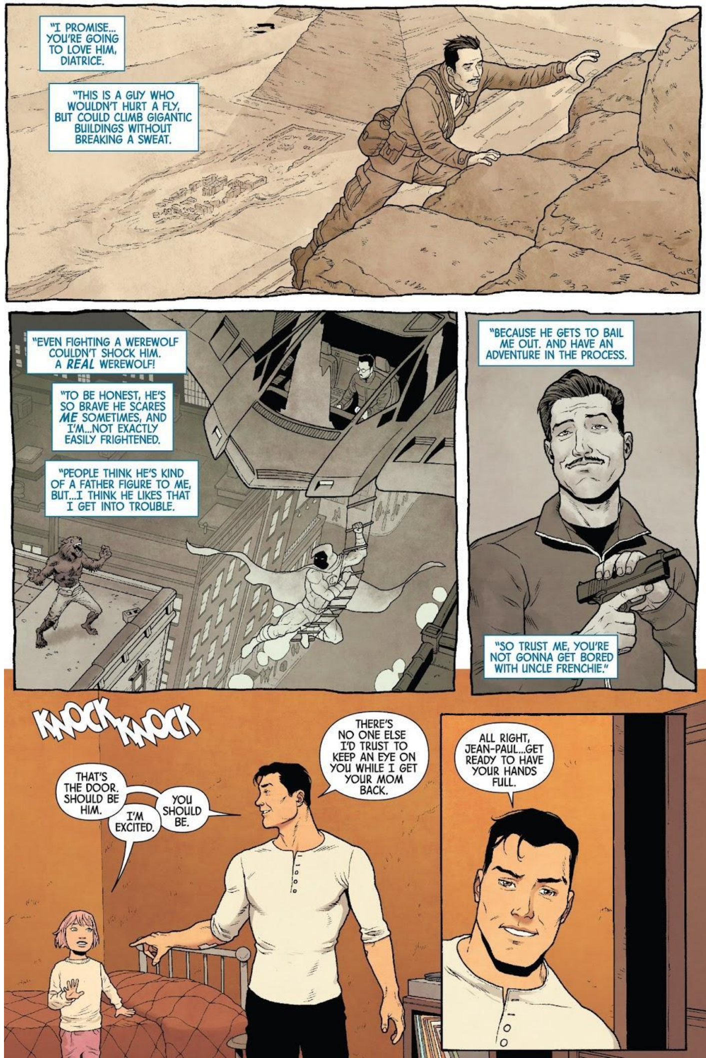


INDEED, SPECTOR.
THE OLD ONES CONGEALED IN THEIR NEW ENVIRONMENT... BECAME ONE SIMPLE SPIRITUAL ENTITY.
THE SOURCE OF ALL PERSECUTION, TOXIC PRIDE AND TRUE DEPRAVITY.
WHEN THE NAME "GOD" IS INVOKED IN THE NAME OF HATRED, DESPITE ITS TRUE MEANING, THE IGNORANT FUEL THE POWER OF THE WORD'S OPPOSITE MEANING.
THEIR INVISIBLE KING IS A LEVIATHAN MADE OF ANTIMATTER.
NAMED MANY THINGS OVER THE COURSE OF HUMAN HISTORY, BUT IN MY TIME...
THE GOD THAT THE EGYPTIANS PRAYED WOULD KEEP THEIR SLAVES IN LINE, THEIR COFFERS FULL, THE BEAST OF CIVILIZATION UNCHECKED BY DEFEAT.
HE. THEY. IT.
MY FATHER. RA.
KHONSHU, YOUR DADDY ISSUES ARE ICONIC.
HEHE.
THIS IS NO FARCE.
WILL YOU BE LAUGHING WHEN SUN KING STANDS OVER YOUR DAUGHTER'S SMOLDERING CORPSE?
... NO, KHONSHU.
OBVIOUSLY.
THEN SUIT UP.
BECAUSE YOU'D BETTER DESTROY THEM...
...BEFORE RA TURNS YOUR DEATH INTO MODERN MYTH.


I CAN'T STOP EATING.
I EAT BECAUSE I FEEL POWERLESS.
I FEEL POWERLESS BECAUSE I'M OBSESSED WITH THE HANDSOME DIRTBAG WHO TORE MY FACE OFF.
IT WOULD BE DRUGS RATHER THAN FOOD, BUT I CAN'T BECAUSE I'M A DRUG LORD AND THAT WOULD BE UNPROFESSIONAL.
NOT THAT IT MATTERS.
I JUST GOT REPLACED AS ENEMY NUMBER ONE, SO I MIGHT AS WELL JUST...
RAOUL.
IT'S HAPPENING AGAIN.
@#$%!
I THOUGHT I TOLD YOU TO CONTROL YOURSELF!
I'M TRYING.
SOMETIMES IT JUST KIND OF HAPPENS WITHOUT ME TRYING.
LIKE GAS.
ENOUGH!!!


ALL RIGHT. SO WHEN YOU SAY "UNDISCOVERED," YOU MEAN COMPLETELY--
ITS ONLY OCCUPANTS WERE A BACKWARDS TRIBE THAT I..."LIBERATED" BEFORE WE TOOK OVER.
I SPENT A FEW YEARS IN HIDING THERE, VERY COMFORTABLY, BETWEEN DICTATORSHIPS.
EVERY REVOLUTION NEEDS A BEATING HEART.
SAINT PALAEMON ISLAND WILL BE OUR NEW EDEN.
IT'S BEAUTIFUL, ISN'T IT, MARLENE?
WITH THAT LITTLE CUTIE TAKING UP YOUR TIME, I'M SURE IT'S BEEN A WHILE SINCE YOUR LAST TROPICAL VACATION.
I'D LIKE TO SEE SPECTOR OUTDO THIS.
YOU'VE GONE SO FAR AS TO TIE UP A SUPER HERO'S GIRLFRIEND AND YOU'RE BRAGGING TO HER ABOUT YOUR EVIL PLAN.
YOU'RE NOT PROFOUND, YOU'RE A LINKLESS WIKIPEDIA REFERENCE WAITING TO HAPPEN.
PERHAPS THAT'S SO.
BUT I'M STILL GOING TO KILL YOUR CHILD WHILE HER DAD LOOKS ON.
JUST TO PROVE THE USELESSNESS OF HIS CAUSE.


I DON'T NEED YOU TO BELIEVE IN ME, MARLENE.
LIKE THE WALKING RED HERRING YOU ARE.
I JUST NEED YOU TO LURE HIM IN YET AGAIN.
GET HIM ON THAT BOAT, BOY.
ONCE YOU'VE SERVED ME AND LIVED OUT YOUR PURPOSE, YOU'LL BE JOINING US IN PARADISE.
ARE YOU READY TO CREATE THE ARMY THAT WILL DETHRONE THE FALSE PRINCE OF THE NIGHT?
...
DO YOU NEED HIM WITH BOTH OF HIS EYES?


"I PROMISE... YOU'RE GOING TO LOVE HIM, DIATRICE.
"THIS IS A GUY WHO WOULDN'T HURT A FLY, BUT COULD CLIMB GIGANTIC BUILDINGS WITHOUT BREAKING A SWEAT.
"EVEN FIGHTING A WEREWOLF COULDN'T SHOCK HIM. A *REAL* WEREWOLF!
"TO BE HONEST, HE'S SO BRAVE HE SCARES *ME* SOMETIMES, AND I'M...NOT EXACTLY EASILY FRIGHTENED.
"PEOPLE THINK HE'S KIND OF A FATHER FIGURE TO ME, BUT...I THINK HE LIKES THAT I GET INTO TROUBLE.
"BECAUSE HE GETS TO BAIL ME OUT. AND HAVE AN ADVENTURE IN THE PROCESS.
"SO TRUST ME, YOU'RE NOT GONNA GET BORED WITH UNCLE FRENCHIE."
KNOCK KNOCK
THAT'S THE DOOR. SHOULD BE HIM.
I'M EXCITED.
YOU SHOULD BE.
THERE'S NO ONE ELSE I'D TRUST TO KEEP AN EYE ON YOU WHILE I GET YOUR MOM BACK.
ALL RIGHT, JEAN-PAUL...GET READY TO HAVE YOUR HANDS FULL.



MOON KNIGHT

YIKES! Frenchie's not looking so good. Maybe he caught that cold that's been going around.

We've gotten a ton of AMAZING mail from the first issues, so let's jump right into your awesome letters!

Max,

I think I finally get "Crazy runs in the family" hours after reading MOON KNIGHT #188; so this guy possessed by Amon Ra is a relative of Marc Spector, then? So where's the real Specs? The artwork is more than good enough! I still think MK belongs on a team as much as on his own. I'd break off all the adjectives and put Moon Knight on...hmm, let me think...Avengers!!! Yeah, that's it; it'd be good for him, and his solo series. Great issue.

Cheers,
Andrew J. Shaw

I can't speak to any familial relation between Marc and Sun King, but I can guarantee our Marc is the real Marc Spector and, as you've seen in recent issues, family is going to become a pretty big deal for him. Stay tuned, Andrew!

Dearest Max Bemis,

Let me start this letter off by being a bit of a fanboy for a second. Say Anything was a huge influence and help to me in my awkward, troubled young adult years. I've seen you live several times when you've come to Buffalo (and once in Rochester), and my ex and I even got a song from your song shop, ironically entitled Spider-Man. While we've since broken up, I know that song has meant a lot to both of us over the years.

With that out of the way, when I first saw your name on your WORST X-MEN EVER book, I was intrigued. I was very happy to find that it was also a fantastic story that hit on a lot of the same themes of self-doubt that drew me to your music a decade ago. Then I read your run on FOOLKILLER and was blown away. You took a total throwaway character and gave him an amazing arc and deep characterization. I absolutely loved that book, in fact, I'm going to re-read it after I send this.

Moon Knight, as a character, has always held a special place in my heart because of his struggles with mental illness. So when I saw your name on the new MOON KNIGHT book I had high hopes, to say the least. You delivered more than I could have hoped for with this first issue. You balance serious looks at mental illness with humor as well as ever. The line about being a "Foo Fighters guy" felt like a wink to me directly (obviously not possible) as I've said that countless times to friends (who didn't ask even once). The artwork is also breathtaking, shout out to Jacen Burrows for such incredible work. I really can't wait to see what you do with these characters, I'm already super into Amon Ra after one issue.

I could go on forever so let me end this by saying that you have a steadfast fan here for life. Thank you for helping me feel a little less alone in this world.

Dalton Ardillo
Buffalo, NY

P.S. This was my first ever letter to a column!

Welcome, Dalton! So glad to hear that Max's awesome musical fans are following him over to comics! And we're thrilled we were your first letter column, that's quite the honor! Hope we've lived up to your expectations!

Hey Kathleen, Mark & Jake,

Brilliant idea to commission Sienkiewicz to riff on Sienkiewicz. Bill paying homage to his younger self with a simple, beautiful design with maximum impact; one of the best lenticular covers in the Legacy launch. The overlay of each image, clashing...there's something not quite right...

...which segues into the uneasy story inside the dual covers. Max Bemis and Jacen Burrows are going somewhere darker and more horror-based in this arc. I believe, too, but without the severe burns. Certainly enough to see where Max and Jacen are going to take us.

Be seeing you,

Bruce Marsh
Newbury Park
England

Glad we could get you to believe without going through the same trauma as poor Dr. Emmet! And boy howdy, that Sienkiewicz cover sure was killer, wasn't it? When thinking about Moon Knight's legacy, how can you not think about the brilliant Bill Sienkiewicz?! If you've never checked out his incredible MOON KNIGHT run, you owe it to yourself to take in those beauties!

Hello MK crew!

Just wanted to drop a quick note and let you know how much I enjoyed the Legacy relaunch. The art and writing are both top notch, every letter and line are simply perfect. I cannot wait to read more from the team of Bemis and Burrows! The new villain was very well done, and I have never enjoyed a single issue more in which the title hero did not even appear! I think they have the talent to elevate Moon Knight to his well-deserved status among the A-list heroes in Marvel's stable.

On a side note, if you are looking for a letters column title I would like to submit Knight Mails as my suggestion. Again, thank you for breathing life into one of my most favorite and criminally underused characters!

Thomas White
Manhattan, IL

Thanks for the love for team Bemis and Burrows, Thomas! Seems like there should be a more fun name for that team, right? The BBs? Macen Burrmis? I might not be good at this. Regardless, glad we're doing good by your favorites!

Hey Marvel!

MK starts off great! It felt like I was reading his series from the 80s! I never heard of either Max Bemis or Jacen Burrows, but my god (Khonshu), this is gonna be good!
Best regards

Nikolaj

Nikolaj, if you've never heard of Max or Jacen, you are in for a real good time, my man! Firstly, you're getting this killer MOON KNIGHT book, but you also have a pretty excellent back catalogue to go through! Max's other job is rock star, so if you dig his writing here, check out the killer lyrics he writes for his band, Say Anything! And Jacen's been doing incredible work on a number of Avatar books for years, crafting some haunting, beautiful, and occasionally extremely upsetting art. If you dig horror comics, check out anything he did over there, particularly his runs on Providence and Crossed (but again, only if you have a strong stomach. Those books are INTENSE!).

Wow. What a start.

As a long time Moon Knight fan I go into each new volume cautiously, and this time was no different. I worried about the creation of an arch-nemesis, a stated goal of the new volume, as I didn't want it to seem forced. And of course Bushman has held that title in most people's minds. MK has one of the most unique and memorable rogues galleries in comics, so there is a lot to live up to, and you guys are off to a great start. Tying the new foe into the Egyptian mythology just plain works, and the history of the respective gods lends itself to rivalry, and this origin provides Ra with direct ties to Marc/ Moon Knight. And by devoting an entire issue to exploring this origin, instead of a rushed villain attacking MK out of nowhere, you've made me care about what happens next. A first issue without the titular hero? Bold. But in this case, it works. Very eager to see what you guys have planned. Seems Marvel continues to pick the right creative voices for this character.

Mike Gronemeyer
Rochester, NY

Thanks for all those really kind words, Mike! You're definitely picking up what we're putting down, so that's awesome to hear! We were all a little freaked out about a first issue with no actual Moon Knight, but I think Max, Jacen, Mat, and Cory all absolutely knocked it out of the park!

"Crazy Runs in the Family" Part 1 is my first time reading MOON KNIGHT and I really enjoyed the first issue. Looking forward to the next issue to see where it goes.

Shane Detert

Thanks for writing in, Shane! Hope the rest of the issues thus far have been just as enjoyable as the first, if not moreso!

Guys,

That was the creepiest Moon Knight book in my collection, and we're talking about a character that wore his nemesis's peeled off face once.

Welcome aboard my favorite character, and now I can stop begging, pleading, and harassing your editor on twitter about the status of this book.

It's fantastic. More please. More of that. And other things I haven't seen yet. This was worth the wait!

Marcus Vitchell

Marcus! I always appreciate hearing from fans and having a chance to up my gif-game online, but it's even better to get actual mail for the book! The book that you now have in your hands! I hope you've been digging it, particularly the return of said villain who once lost his face. Poor Marc's going to have a lot on his plate very soon.

Hello Mr. Bemis & Mr. Burrows,

Thank you. If your first issue is any indication, this is the MOON KNIGHT I've been awaiting for a long time, maybe since the days of Doug Moench. While I have certainly enjoyed the quality of writers and artists on the various MOON KNIGHT versions during the last few years, I really was hoping to get back to Moon Knight as the Avenger of the Night and not so much the psychologically troubled individual of the night. Although Moon Knight is offstage for this first issue, from what is said and from the short bio at the rear of the book it seems that he has reconciled his personalities to the point that he will be able to function. The multiple personalities always made sense for him since Egypt has at least seven Moon gods of which Khons(h)u is not even the most dominant. I figured as soon as various aspects of the Moon God could learn to work together, then Moon Knight could return to the fight. Anyhow, I was 22 when MOON KNIGHT first came along and I'm still reading him, so that should tell you something.

The artwork is beautiful and the story is perfect. I feel like under your guidance, The Moon Will Rise. By the way, if you don't have a name for the letter column, how about MoonWriting?

Keep it rising,
Phil

Invoking the name of the great Doug Moench! Boy, we must be doing something right! Thanks for writing, Phil! As you've seen over the past couple of issues, all might not be as peachy keen with the other personalities as Marc thought, but I hope we've still got you invested in the story we're telling. I promise you, there's a lot of great stuff coming!

Ok, I'm on board. Team Bemis, Burrows, and Lopes have captured the complexity of the character and created a villain worthy of doing battle with our misunderstood hero. Every hero needs an equally formidable antagonist to bring forth their best qualities. The groundwork has been laid and I'm excited to see where the story goes. I especially appreciate the creative team paying homage to and linking this story to Marc's past. It was great to see Dr. Emmet again. I hope she will be OK. I also thought the three-page Moon Knight primer by Robbie Thompson and German Peralta was the best quick overview of an exceptionally complex character I have ever read. Thank you all for creating a book that really engages a reader and makes one think. I believe Marc, Steven, Jake, and Khonshu are in good hands.

Mark Pearson
San Francisco, CA

Ooh, Mark, I don't know that poor Dr. Emmet is anywhere close to approaching OK. Not a lot of people crossing the Sun King's path seem to end up terribly OK, which certainly doesn't bode well for Marc, Marlene, or Diatrice...

Dear MOON KNIGHT editorial team,

First of all, congrats on starting a new series for this wonderful character! I'm always pleased to see this guy get a revival, as I've been a fan of this character since discovering him through the Marvel: Ultimate Alliance video game. I especially enjoy the fact that Moon Knight's rogues gallery is expanding, something I've personally been wanting to see for a while. Will readers be seeing any other characters come in to help him in the future, or is our Silver Specter (Spector?) still the lone wolf he's been since the Warren Ellis run? Can't wait to find out in the coming months!

Josh Pierce

Well, Josh, Marc's still definitely marching to the beat of his own drummer, but now with Marlene and Diatrice in the picture, who knows who else might come dropping by? We can't wait for you to find out, either!

So I just finished MOON KNIGHT #188 and HAD to write in.

I've been a fan of Moon Knight forever now and I have read every single issue since 1980, so I was really looking forward to this, but also very scared, as you never want your favorite hero to get a bad run, but oh boy am I happy...

I'm blown away with this issue, it was everything I wanted and more. It was in-depth, powerful, weird, and very, very crazy... Which is just how we like it.

What a great introduction to Patient 86, am I allowed to call him the Sun King yet? Or do I have to wait a little longer?

Jacen and Mat did amazing together, the drawings and the color really pops, ESPECIALLY the dark red blood. That scene of Patient 86 in his room with blood everywhere literally made me scream with horror... and excitement...

Lastly, I just wanted to say THANK YOU MAX for bringing such a new and exciting character to us fans, and a fresh take on Moon Knight. And from the bottom of my heart, I CANNOT WAIT TO READ MORE. I guess you could say I'm "over the moon"...

Sincerely, your crazy friend across the pond,
Azeem
London, UK

Azeem, your "over the moon" joke made ME literally scream with both horror and excitement! And you better believe you can call him Sun King. In fact, you'd better! He doesn't seem like the kind of guy who'd be chill about someone calling him by his old name. With those fire powers, I don't know that he's chill about ANYTHING! (I can hear you groaning, but I REFUSE TO APOLOGIZE.) I'm glad you called out Mat Lopes's work, I think he's been absolutely killing it on this book! Those colors are absolutely drool-worthy.

Greetings Max Bemis and Jacen Burrows! And greetings to you too, Robbie Thompson and German Peralta!!!

The countdown's finally over!!! MOON KNIGHT #188 is here and it is great! Moon Knight is my favorite hero, by far, and I think you are up for something huge! I really enjoyed the first issue, but the timeline in my head is starting to fall apart. In Lemire's run, which I loved, Spector has glimpses of his past that include Dr. Emmet during his youth (by the way, was she given a full name?). Therefore, those flashbacks must be canon, right? But, in those same glimpses, he's beaten hard by Bushman and is left to die in the desert, not with gunfire as it is shown in the primer pages...

I really wish this series leads to great Moon Knight stories to be remembered, and that both old and new characters show up.

Till then, thank you for your time and consideration.

Pedro Afonso
Portugal



PS: This photo was taken during my first Comic-con

WHOA! Rocking costume, Pedro! Hopefully you're already happy at some of the old crew who has stopped by! As for those flashbacks, they're baaaasically canon, but they're also Marc's memories, and Marc's memories may not be the most reliable, (and that may not be the last we've seen of Marc's uncertain headspace).

That's all we got! So, I'll see you next month with more MOON KNIGHT madness! Until then...

STAY WEIRD!
-Jake T.


CRAZY RUNS IN THE FAMILY
MARVEL LEGACY
192
MOON KNIGHT
BEMIS
BURROWS
ORTEGO
LOPES
AGENTS OF
S.H.I.E.L.D.
LANDMARK 100TH EPISODE
FRIDAY, MARCH 9

Marc Spector. Steven Grant. Jake Lockley. Each a distinct personality of one man vying for control. Spector, the original personality, has asserted his dominance and fights to retain that control. But years ago, as a mercenary, Spector died in Egypt under a statue of the moon god **Khonshu.** In the shadow of the ancient deity, Marc returned to life. From then on, Marc took on a new aspect in honor of Khonshu, dedicating his second life to fighting crime as…

MOON KNIGHT

CRAZY RUNS IN THE FAMILY

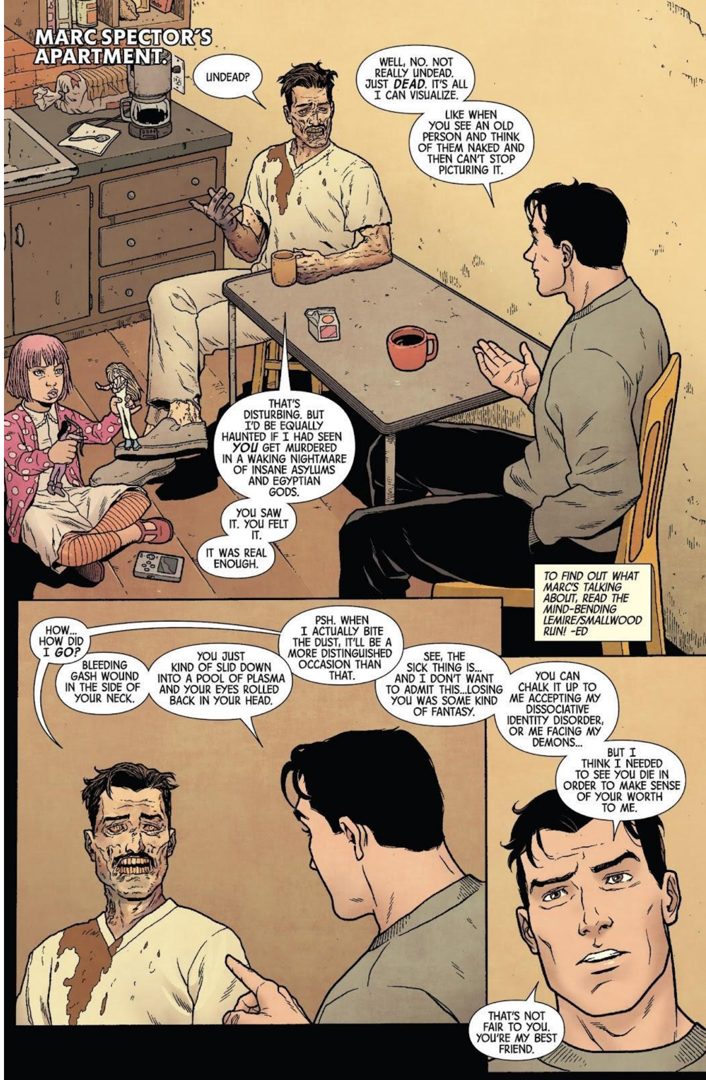
PART 5

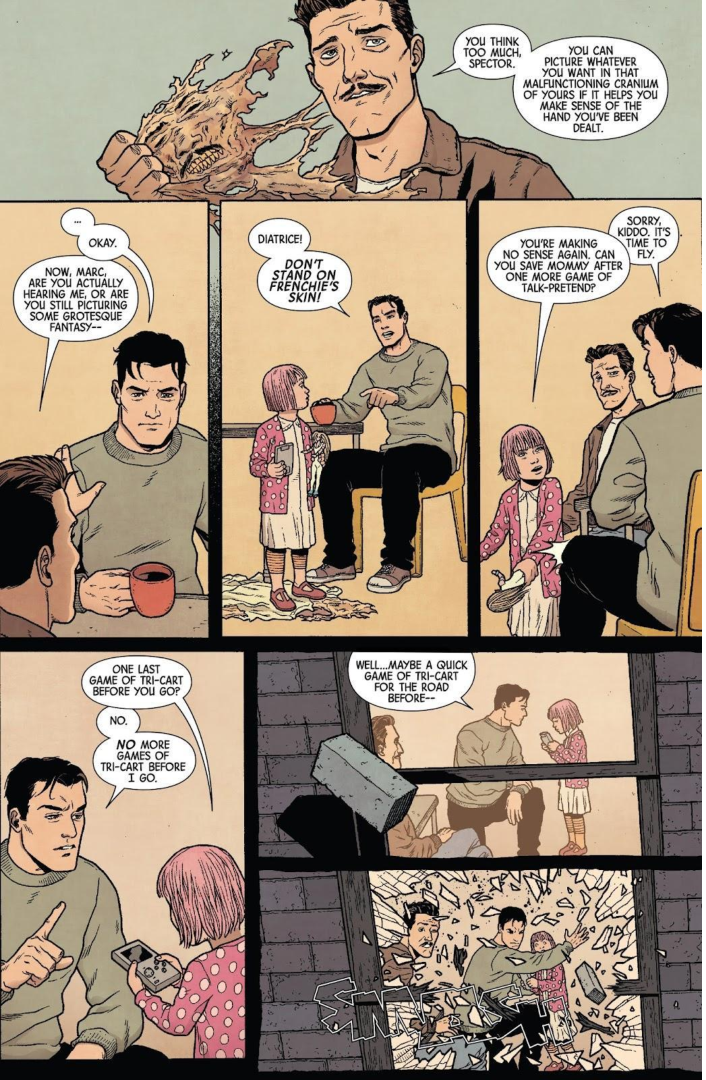
An escaped mental patient with power over fire and a perceived connection to the Egyptian sun god Ra is aiming to tear Moon Knight's world apart. Calling himself Sun King, he enlisted Marc's old nemesis, Bushman, to hit Marc where it really hurts by forcing his former lover, Marlene, to draw him into an ambush.

Caught off guard as he was, Marc was even more shocked to learn that his Jake Lockley personality had secretly maintained an affair with Marlene, and that she's been raising their young daughter, Diatrice. As a literal fire fight broke out, Marc managed to save Diatrice, while Marlene was captured.

It's all part of Sun King's plan, though, and as Marc knows he'll need to play along to keep Marlene safe, he's called in his old friend Frenchie to watch Diatrice. But last time Marc saw Frenchie…wasn't he dead?

Writer MAX BEMIS
Penciler JACEN BURROWS
Inker GUILLERMO ORTEGO
Colorist MAT LOPES
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Chief Creative Officer JOE QUESADA
President DAN BUCKLEY
Executive Producer ALAN FINE




YOU THINK TOO MUCH, SPECTOR.
YOU CAN PICTURE WHATEVER YOU WANT IN THAT MALFUNCTIONING CRANIUM OF YOURS IF IT HELPS YOU MAKE SENSE OF THE HAND YOU'VE BEEN DEALT.
...
OKAY.
NOW, MARC, ARE YOU ACTUALLY HEARING ME, OR ARE YOU STILL PICTURING SOME GROTESQUE FANTASY--
DIATRICE!
DON'T STAND ON FRENCHIE'S SKIN!
YOU'RE MAKING NO SENSE AGAIN. CAN YOU SAVE MOMMY AFTER ONE MORE GAME OF TALK-PRETEND?
SORRY, KIDDO. IT'S TIME TO FLY.
ONE LAST GAME OF TRI-CART BEFORE YOU GO?
NO.
NO MORE GAMES OF TRI-CART BEFORE I GO.
WELL...MAYBE A QUICK GAME OF TRI-CART FOR THE ROAD BEFORE--

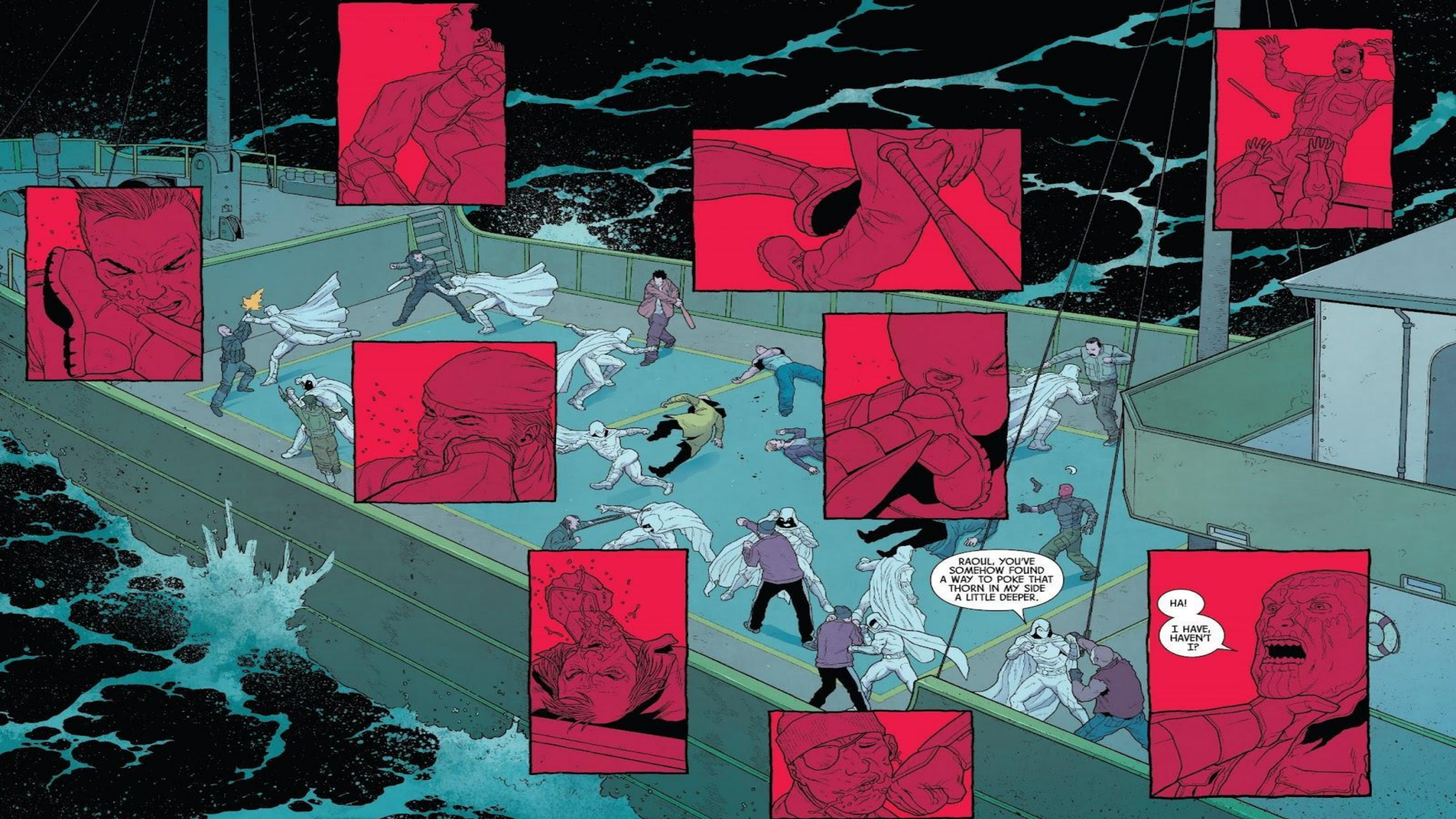

SPECTOR!
HOLD THAT POSE, YOU GARGOYLE-RIDING @#$%.
THIS YOUR NEW SPOT?
REAL QUAINT.
YOU SHOULD COME TO THE LOBBY AND HAVE A LITTLE SIT-DOWN WITH US.
GRANDMA FROM THE FRONT DESK WOULD REALLY APPRECIATE IT.
AND DON'T YOU THINK YOUR LITTLE LADY HAS SEEN ENOUGH BLOODSHED?


CHILDREN ARE BORN INTO SIN.
I'M NOT GOING TO BE ABLE TO PARSE YOUR DEMANDS IF YOUR TRUTH-SLAVES ARE GOING TO KEEP CHIMING IN WITH THIS CRAP.
I HAD A DAUGHTER ONCE. SHE'S A CORRUPT COLLEGIATE STRUMPET NOW.
TRUTH! QUIET DOWN THE RIFF-RAFF!
WHEN MARC TALKS, WE LISTEN! HE'S ALL I REALLY HAVE IN THIS WORLD!
WE WON'T SET FOOT IN YOUR PLACE IF YOU GET ON THE BOAT.
AND THIS MYSTERIOUS UNNAMED BOAT IS GOING...
TO OUR NEW HOME.
AS APPEALING AS IT IS TO HAVE A NAUTICAL PLAYDATE WITH YOU, RAOUL, I'M ABOUT TO BE VERY BUSY MAIMING AND BLUDGEONING THIS ENTIRE ROOM FULL OF PEOPLE.
MARLENE!
SHE'S THERE. WAITING FOR YOU.


AND SO MARC SPECTOR FOUND HIMSELF DRIFTING ROUGHLY UP THAT PROVERBIAL @#$% CREEK ONCE AGAIN.
I MEAN THAT LITERALLY. HE WAS STRAPPED TO A DEATH-BARGE SHIVERING IN THE THRALL OF A ROILING, MYSTERIOUS SEASCAPE.
HIS FATE UNKNOWN.
HIS TRUE LOVE IN THE HANDS OF HIS ENEMIES.
MR. BUSHMAN, THE KING SAID WE'RE NOT SUPPOSED TO MESS WITH HIM...
...THAT'S HOW WE ENDED UP--
SHUT YOUR MOUTH.
I KNOW WHAT HE SAID.
I JUST...
I THINK I'M ACTUALLY ADDICTED TO TRYING TO CUT HIM.

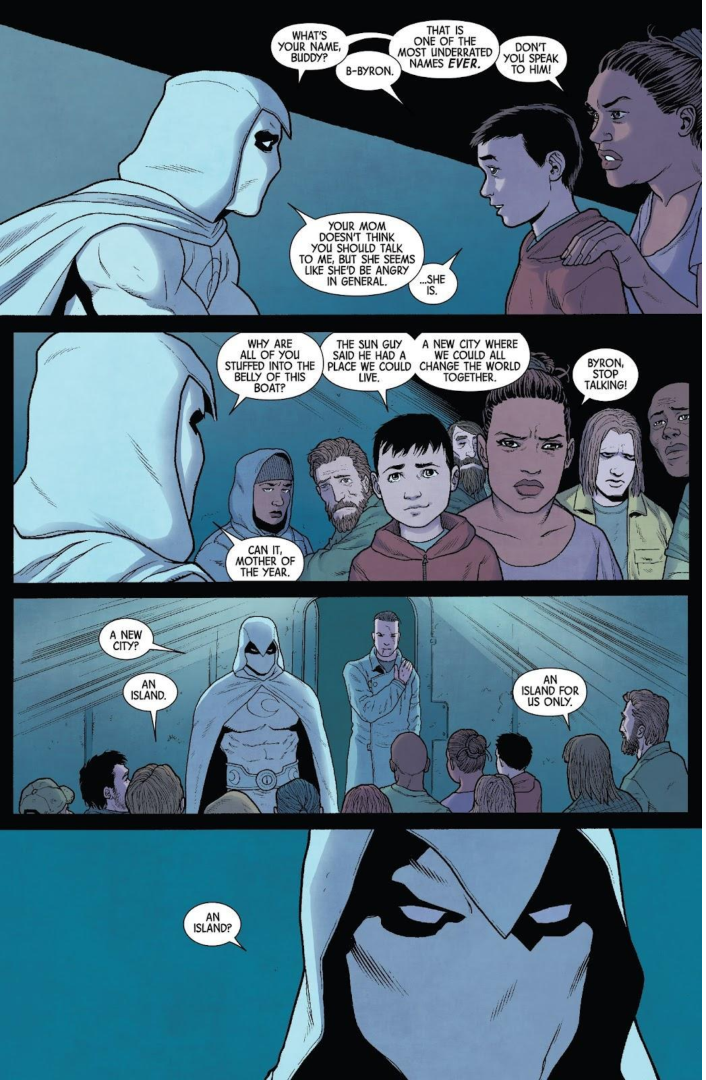

SCRUNCH
AAAH!
KRUNCH
SLICE
WHAM
SHUNK
WHUMP
YOU DID THIS, BUSHMAN, YOU SICK @#%$!
I KNOW! I'M SORRY!

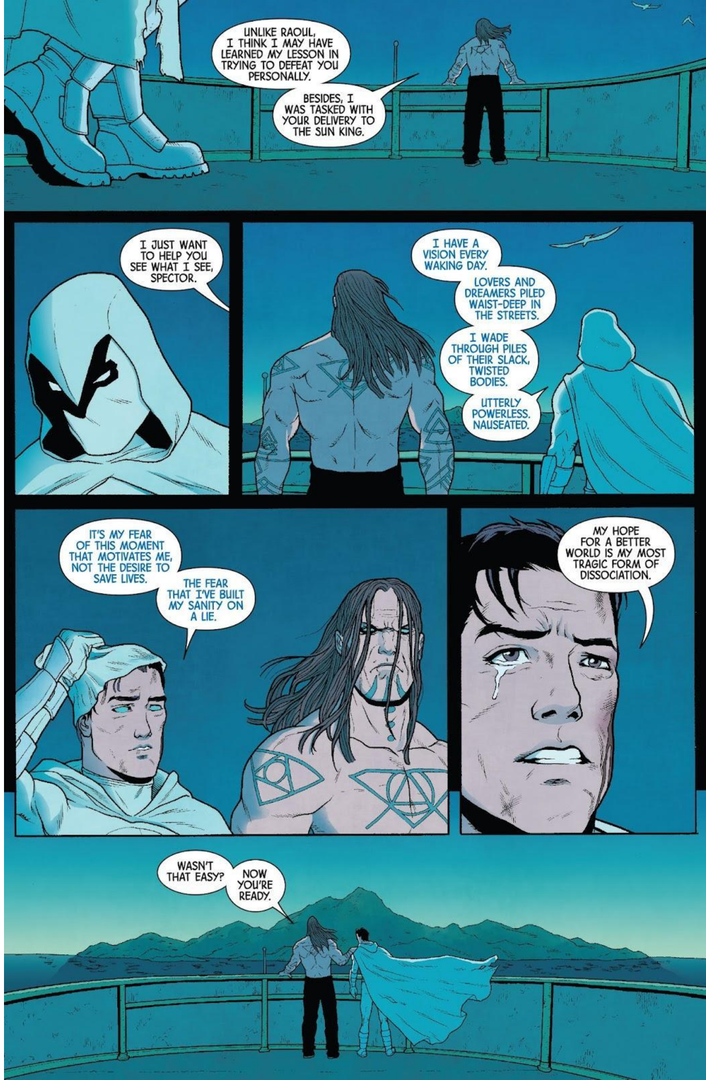

WHAM
SLICE
BAM
CRACK
WHACK
WHUMP
YOU WANT TO PLAY PIRATES? YO $%#& HO, MATEYS.


RAOUL, YOU'VE SOMEHOW FOUND A WAY TO POKE THAT THORN IN MY SIDE A LITTLE DEEPER.
HA!
I HAVE, HAVEN'T I?

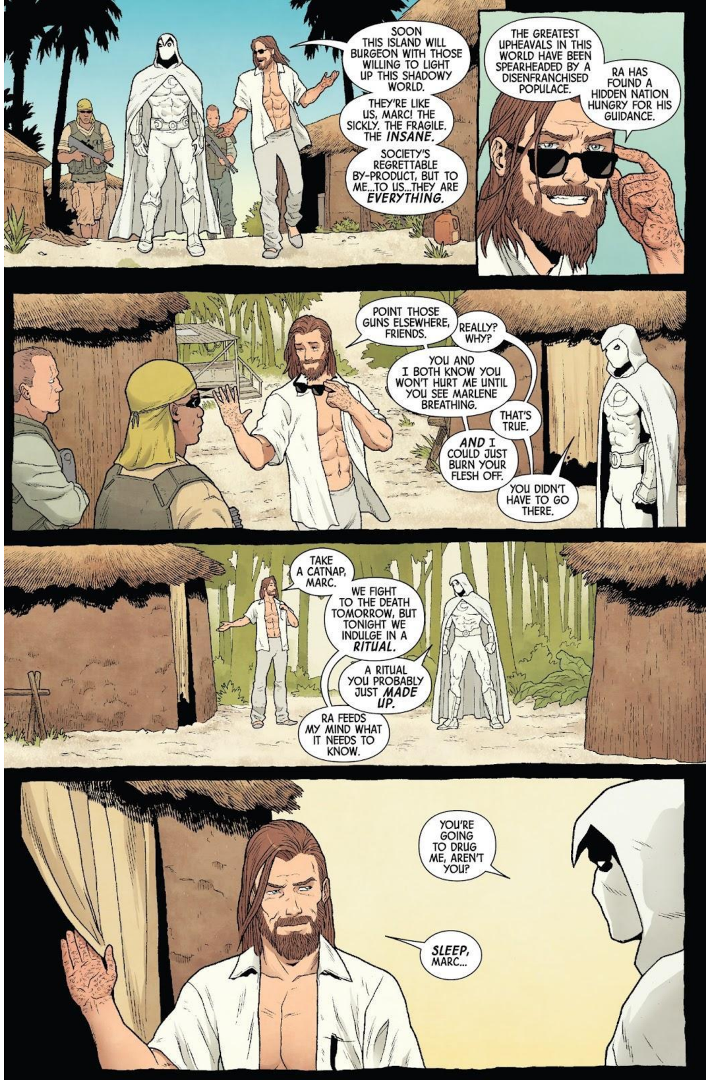

BUT IT WAS A MISTAKE THREATENING THE MOTHER OF MY CHILD.
YOU DON'T SCARE ME, SPECTOR!
I DIDN'T WANT TO HAVE TO DO THIS TO YOU AGAIN.
SHUNK
AIIIEEEEEEE!!!
YOU CAN REPLACE THOSE, BUT THEY'LL NEVER BE YOURS AGAIN.
AND NEXT TIME, I WON'T BE SATISFIED WITH A *PIECE* OF YOU.
I'M NOT ONE OF THOSE SUPER HEROES WHO WON'T STRAIGHT-UP KILL YOU, BUSHMAN.
NOW, ONE OF YOU.
SHOW ME.
WHAT'S THE DEAL WITH THIS STUPID BOAT?


OY, GOD.
WHAT IS THIS?!
HEY, MAN...THEY *SIGNED UP!*


WHAT'S YOUR NAME, BUDDY?
B-BYRON.
THAT IS ONE OF THE MOST UNDERRATED NAMES EVER.
DON'T YOU SPEAK TO HIM!
YOUR MOM DOESN'T THINK YOU SHOULD TALK TO ME, BUT SHE SEEMS LIKE SHE'D BE ANGRY IN GENERAL.
...SHE IS.
WHY ARE ALL OF YOU STUFFED INTO THE BELLY OF THIS BOAT?
THE SUN GUY SAID HE HAD A PLACE WE COULD LIVE.
A NEW CITY WHERE WE COULD ALL CHANGE THE WORLD TOGETHER.
BYRON, STOP TALKING!
CAN IT, MOTHER OF THE YEAR.
A NEW CITY?
AN ISLAND.
AN ISLAND FOR US ONLY.
AN ISLAND?


UNLIKE RAOUL, I THINK I MAY HAVE LEARNED MY LESSON IN TRYING TO DEFEAT YOU PERSONALLY.
BESIDES, I WAS TASKED WITH YOUR DELIVERY TO THE SUN KING.
I JUST WANT TO HELP YOU SEE WHAT I SEE, SPECTOR.
I HAVE A VISION EVERY WAKING DAY.
LOVERS AND DREAMERS PILED WAIST-DEEP IN THE STREETS.
I WADE THROUGH PILES OF THEIR SLACK, TWISTED BODIES.
UTTERLY POWERLESS. NAUSEATED.
IT'S MY FEAR OF THIS MOMENT THAT MOTIVATES ME, NOT THE DESIRE TO SAVE LIVES.
THE FEAR THAT I'VE BUILT MY SANITY ON A LIE.
MY HOPE FOR A BETTER WORLD IS MY MOST TRAGIC FORM OF DISSOCIATION.
WASN'T THAT EASY?
NOW YOU'RE READY.


MARC.
WELCOME TO ISLA RA. YOU'VE BEEN MISSED.
ISLA RA?
THIS IS JUST A BUNCH OF SHACKS ON A BEACH.
IT IS *NOW.*


SOON THIS ISLAND WILL BURGEON WITH THOSE WILLING TO LIGHT UP THIS SHADOWY WORLD.
THEY'RE LIKE US, MARC! THE SICKLY. THE FRAGILE. THE *INSANE.*
SOCIETY'S REGRETTABLE BY-PRODUCT, BUT TO ME...TO US...THEY ARE *EVERYTHING.*
THE GREATEST UPHEAVALS IN THIS WORLD HAVE BEEN SPEARHEADED BY A DISENFRANCHISED POPULACE.
RA HAS FOUND A HIDDEN NATION HUNGRY FOR HIS GUIDANCE.
POINT THOSE GUNS ELSEWHERE, FRIENDS.
REALLY? WHY?
YOU AND I BOTH KNOW YOU WON'T HURT ME UNTIL YOU SEE MARLENE BREATHING.
THAT'S TRUE.
AND I COULD JUST BURN YOUR FLESH OFF.
YOU DIDN'T HAVE TO GO THERE.
TAKE A CATNAP, MARC.
WE FIGHT TO THE DEATH TOMORROW, BUT TONIGHT WE INDULGE IN A *RITUAL.*
A RITUAL YOU PROBABLY JUST *MADE UP.*
RA FEEDS MY MIND WHAT IT NEEDS TO KNOW.
YOU'RE GOING TO DRUG ME, AREN'T YOU?
SLEEP, MARC...


"...TONIGHT, WE BECOME ENLIGHTENED."
WHY DID WE HAVE TO DO THIS HALF NAKED?
SHHHH. LET YOUR MIND UNRAVEL, SPECTOR.
I DON'T DO WELL WITH PSYCHEDELICS, SUN KING.
IT WAS ONLY TEA.
IT SMELLED LIKE WOODSTOCK.
WE SHARE WHAT THEY LABEL "INSANITY." THAT GIVES ME A GATEWAY INTO YOUR BEAUTIFUL, TORTURED MIND.
LET ME IN, MARC.
LET US IN.
THIS IS NOT REAL.
THIS IS NOT REAL.
THIS IS...


YOU'VE BEEN SUCH A BAD, BAD BOY.
IF YOU WEREN'T SUCH A LOATHSOME FASCIST, I WOULDN'T BE LED TO SUCH EXTREME MEASURES...
FATHER.
LET ME SHOW YOU SOMETHING, KHONSHU.
YOU MIGHT BE SURPRISED TO FIND I'M NOT AS TERRIBLE AS YOU THOUGHT.
HOW IS HE HERE IF THIS IS ALL JUST MADE UP BY MARC'S MIND?
MAYBE IT IS. MAYBE IT ISN'T.
EITHER WAY... I THINK WE'VE ENTERED THE WORLD OF METAPHOR, JAKE.
AND IT'S SCARING THE HELL OUT OF ME.
YOU THINK ME EVIL, AND WISH TO HAVE COMPLETE DOMINION?
WITNESS, SON.
SURRENDER YOURSELF TO THAT VISION.
GAH...



IMAGINE SAVING THE LIVES OF AN INSECT BREEDING GROUND ON A SINGLE SPECK OF ROCK...
THEREBY DISRUPTING THE HARMONY OF ALL NATURE, SURE TO TRIGGER *CATACLYSMIC COLLAPSE* THROUGHOUT THE UNIVERSE. *BILLIONS* WILL DIE.
IS THAT RIGHTEOUSNESS?
IMAGINE THE WORLD HAS ENDED, AND NOBODY IS LEFT TO JUDGE YOU OR CONDEMN YOU.
NO MEME VIRUSES TO INFECT YOUR OPINIONS.
EVEN IN THIS VACUUM, WOULD YOU SYSTEMATICALLY *SAVE BORN KILLERS*, KNOWING THE DANGER THEY POSE TO SOCIETY?
WOULD THAT BE RIGHTEOUSNESS?
YOU SPARE HUMAN BEINGS PAIN, NEGLECT, AND TRAGEDY, DESPITE THE FACT THAT THOSE ARE THE THINGS THAT SHAPE TRUE *PROPHETS* AND *SAVIORS*.
YOU WOULD DEPRIVE THE WORLD OF ALL THEIR ACCOMPLISHMENTS.
IS THAT RIGHTEOUSNESS?
YOU ARE ALREADY LOOKING AT A *LITTLE GIRL* AS THE NEXT GENERATION TO SEND OFF ON YOUR WAR WHILE CLAIMING TO BE THE ONES WHO LOOK OUT FOR HER WELL-BEING.
TELL ME, SON, YOUR CAMPAIGN OF PEACE THROUGH DESTRUCTION, STRENGTH THROUGH WEAKNESS...
IS
THAT
RIGHTEOUS???



MOON KNIGHT

If Ra is right, why does it all feel so wrong??? You'll have to tune in next month to find out, in the big finale of our "Crazy Runs in the Family" arc!

In the meantime, we've gotten some great letters from you fans out there, so let's jump right in!

Nice start. Keep us interested.

Russ Barbee

Russ, are you still around? Did we keep you interested??? LET US KNOW!!!

Dear Editor,

I love what Max Bemis and Jacen Burrows are doing on MOON KNIGHT. The tone of the issues is irreverent, disturbing and funny. This is everything I want from a modern comic and a perfect fit for the character. I'm looking forward to the next issue and I hope this creative team stays on the title for a very long time.

John

Thanks for writing in, John! Glad to hear Team Moon Knight is working for you, I hope you've been enjoying the last few issues!

Just wanted to say, really love what you guys are doing with the MOON KNIGHT series right now. Art is great, writing is stellar and the characters are excellent. You guys got me interested in comics again. Thanks, and long live Moon Knight!

Ian

Ian, I am THRILLED to hear that we brought you back into comics, that's so cool! I hope you've enjoyed jumping back into this wild and woolly arena and hope you've found some other awesome books to fill out your dance card as well! Might I humbly recommend THE PUNISHER? Or, on the complete opposite side of the spectrum, THE UNBEATABLE SQUIRREL GIRL? Lots of great stuff out there these days!

Hey, guys! I have never written in to a comic before despite being a huge fan, but I think this series warrants a letter. I have to say that this series is just amazing! Only reading the first two issues I am already ecstatic for the next issue. Thanks to Marvel Unlimited, I have read so many MOON KNIGHT comics. I just love all the weirdness and dilemmas the writers come up with. One thing I love about this series is the return of Marc's classic personalities, which for some reason have been ignored for a long time. Hope this series continues being great and can't wait for the next issue!

Collin

Thanks for making us your first letter, Collin, we are honored! If you dig the classic personalities have you checked out the Jeff Lemire and Greg Smallwood run? They did some pretty awesome stuff with Jake and Steven, if you haven't given that one a look it's well worth it! In fact, you can see some of the fallout from that story in this very issue!

Moon Knight is entertaining and amazing! I'd love to see this continue.

Big Fan.
Alex

Well, Alex, now WE are big fans of YOU! Your awesomeness is eclipsed only by your brevity. Thanks for writing in!

Holy fist of Khonshu--issue #189 was one great read! I especially appreciated the use of all of Marc's personalities throughout the story, and I had to cheer when our hero ultimately turned to Jake to deal with The Truth. Marc's ability to remain in control while calling upon his "friends" when the situation dictates truly builds upon the fantastic work done by Lemire and Smallwood before you. Thanks for putting together what already appears to be another memorable chapter in the mythos that is Moon Knight.

Mark Pearson
San Francisco

Aw man, thanks, Mark! Glad you're picking up on what Max has been carrying over from the Lemire/Smallwood run, all of that awesome work those two put in was just too good not to keep playing around with! Hope you enjoyed seeing the return of Frenchie!

I already wrote in after reading MOON KNIGHT #188, but after reading the preview for issue #190, I can't help but do it again:

There were several Moon Knights throughout history??? That is so AWESOME! I can already imagine Hercules mentioning having been saved by that Greek/Roman Moon Knight. Or the Avengers traveling back in time and finding Moon Ranger (does this sound like a Power Ranger name?) alongside Two-Gun Kid... Now I am sad Avengers 1,000,000 BC didn't have Khonshu or a Moon Knight as a team member. Let's retcon that! (Kidding!)

Anyway, don't cease to amaze the readers.

Pedro Afonso
Portugal

I was SO EXCITED when Max threw out that idea, and then Jacen, Guillermo, and Mat just absolutely nailed it! I'm glad you dug it, too, Pedro! Hopefully we haven't seen the last of the Moon Knight legacy...

Okay, guys, I don't know what's scarier anymore, Bushman, Ra or the idea of Jake Lockley as a dad.

Marc is in deep. This run is really shaping up to be something special.

This is the first title I legit subscribed to since Jim lee penciled X-MEN. No "picking it up on release day," no "hold it in my sub box/list." I didn't even sub to the Ellis run. I need this sucker the second I can get it.

Best Christmas present ever! Happy holidays, guys! See you in 29.5!

Marcus V

My, my! Counting the days down to decimal points! I've said it before and I'll say it again, subscribing to a comic book at your local comics shop is the highest compliment you can pay any book, so THANK YOU, Marcus! That is so incredible to hear! Not since the amazing Jim Lee X-MEN, you say?! What incredible company to be in!!!

Well, Moon Knight is one of the oldest and weirdest super heroes Marvel has. The story they are currently telling is being well developed. I look forward to #191.

Now THAT'S a %$&@ Moon Knight story! Pardon my language.

Randy Whitehair

Randy, consider your language pardoned, although also grawlixed out for Standards and Practices reasons. I hope you enjoyed #191 and the subsequent issues! Thanks so much for writing in, it made our $%#@ day!!!

Yo, yo, playa.

Just finished reading MOON KNIGHT #190 and wow are my Christmas bells still ringing! The artwork by Burrows is straight money. He is a great guy to have at Marvel. Will he be on any other books soon?

Also, I love Bemis here, this is even better than his X-Men miniseries (which was hilarious). This issue was especially amusing with all the interior thought process. Hey, what's up with the "we got this" usage? I expect better from you, Bemis.

Keep killing it, dawgz!
Petey Popcorn Pissel

Glad we could keep those Christmas bells ringing, Petey! But...what's wrong with "We got this"? Do...do we NOT got this? Regardless, what we DO got is Jacen Burrows, and we don't want to let him go any time soon, his artwork is SO INCREDIBLE! Also, in case anyone isn't super cool and in the know like Petey, that X-Men book Max Bemis wrote was WORST X-MEN EVER, and it was, indeed, hilarious. If you missed it and you're digging this book, check it out!

Dear MOON KNIGHT team,

You guys have really outdone yourselves with this series. You had some big shoes to fill after Jeff Lemire's phenomenal run, but you somehow managed to top it. This series has it all, action, drama, great plot, a hint of comedy and stellar illustrations. The way this series is going I see a legitimate contender for the Eisner Best Continuing Series Award. Can't wait to see what's to come!

Mason Ricci
Walpole, MA

Holy smokes, thanks for those incredibly kind words, Mason! That's some high praise, indeed. And do you hear that, Eisners?!?! The people have spoken, and they love MOON KNIGHT!

Hey, people!

I love the story so far. It's an awesome take on Moon Knight! Loved the person-shifting thing, as well as Marc's cheesy joke. ;-) The art is incredible, it's so full of life! Can't wait to read more.

Best regards,
Nikolaj from Denmark

The art team on this book is, indeed, doing a pretty incredible job, no? Every page is an absolute wonder. And, as a purveyor of extremely cheesy jokes myself, I'm glad to hear others appreciating them as well. More to come, don't you worry! Marc's a dad now, it's part of the gig!

That's all we've got room for this week, but keep writing in and we'll keep cranking out more Moonie goodness for ya! Until then...

**Stay Weird!
Jake T.**



MARVEL LEGACY
CRAZY RUNS IN THE FAMILY
193
MOON KNIGHT
BEMIS
BURROWS
ORTEGO
LOPES

Marc Spector. Steven Grant. Jake Lockley. Each a distinct personality of one man vying for control. Spector, the original personality, has asserted his dominance and fights to retain that control. But years ago, as a mercenary, Spector died in Egypt under a statue of the moon god **Khonshu.** In the shadow of the ancient deity, Marc returned to life. From then on, Marc took on a new aspect in honor of Khonshu, dedicating his second life to fighting crime as...

MOON KNIGHT

CRAZY RUNS IN THE FAMILY

PART 6

Marc Spector finally reached peace, crafting an accord with the other personalities in his head. But that all came crashing down when the Sun King, a psychotic criminal who believes himself an aspect of Ra, discovered one of Marc's personalities, Jake Lockley, had a child with Marc's former flame, Marlene.

The Sun King teamed up with Bushman and the Truth to kidnap Marlene and lure Marc to Isla Ra. Marc left his newly discovered daughter with Frenchie and followed the villains. Once on the island, Marc and the Sun King engaged in a battle of wills wherein the Sun King broke Marc's spirit and made him doubt everything he thought he knew.

Now a new day dawns, and a ritual is being prepared. A ritual to destroy Khonshu, Marc, and everything they've ever loved in the all-powerful flames of Ra's risen sun.

Writer
MAX BEMIS

Penciler
JACEN BURROWS

Inker
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Colorist
MAT LOPES

Letterer
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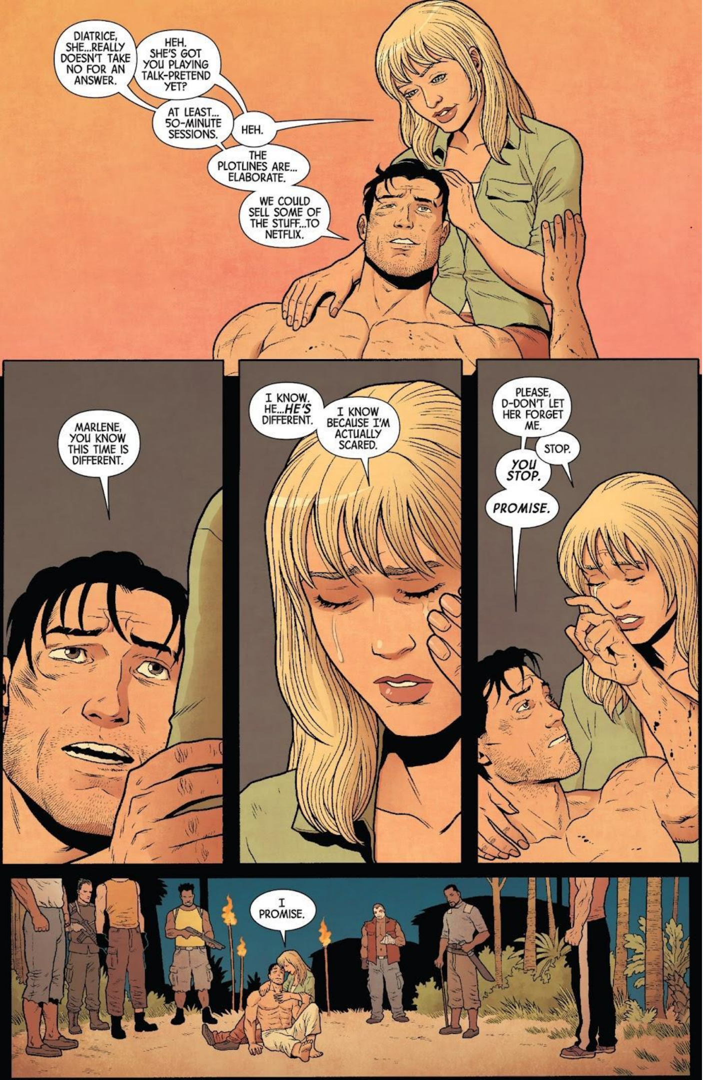
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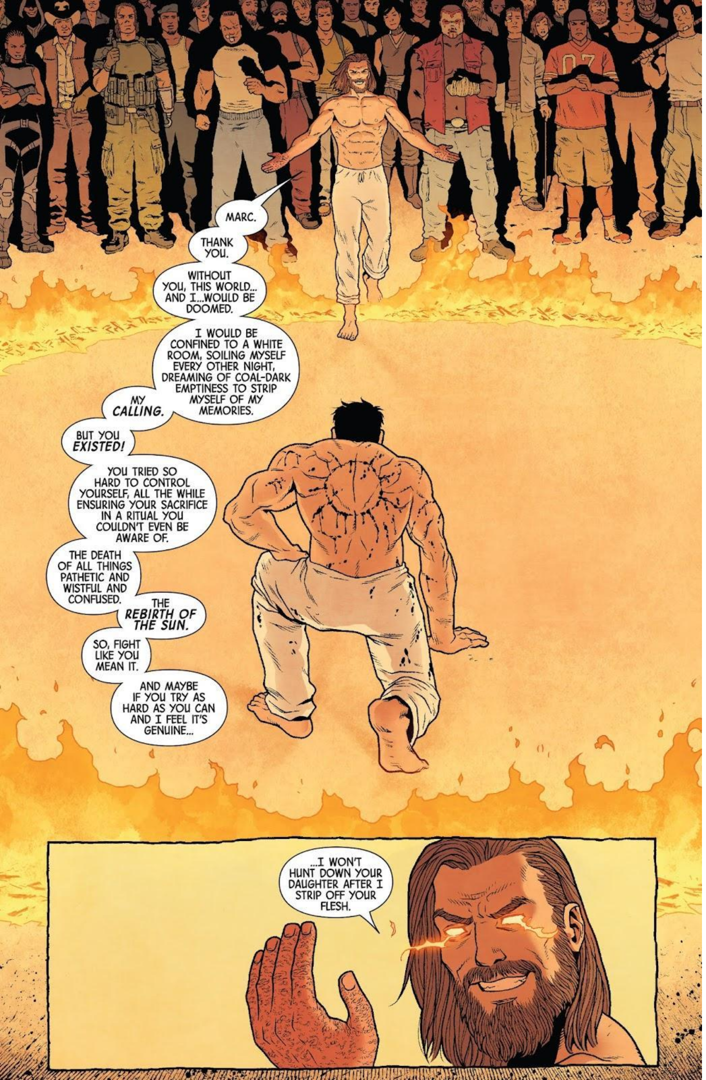



NO! PLEASE!


DEAR MISTER KHONSHU.
UNCLE JAKE USED TO TELL ME STORIES ABOUT THE THINGS YOU CAN DO.
THAT YOU'RE A GOD. SO I'M GOING TO PRAY TO YOU TONIGHT.
"PLEASE DON'T LET THE BAD MEN KILL MY DADDY.
"I THINK I LOVE HIM, SO THAT WOULD BE PRETTY UNFAIR.
"I KNOW YOU'RE SUPPOSED TO PROTECT LOST PEOPLE.
"BUT I JUST FOUND MY DADDY AND I DON'T WANT TO LOSE HIM AGAIN.
"SO MAYBE YOU CAN HELP HIM ANYWAY.
"AND PLEASE LET HIM SAVE MY MOMMY.
"I KNOW HE CAN BECAUSE SHE'S BEAUTIFUL AND THAT'S WHAT SUPER HEROES DO.
"SAVE BEAUTIFUL GIRLS."
YOUR TIME'S UP, SPECTOR.
THEN WE CAN FINALLY BE A FAMILY.
BLESS YOU, KHONSHU.
AMEN.


DIATRICE, SHE...REALLY DOESN'T TAKE NO FOR AN ANSWER.
HEH. SHE'S GOT YOU PLAYING TALK-PRETEND YET?
AT LEAST... 50-MINUTE SESSIONS.
HEH.
THE PLOTLINES ARE... ELABORATE.
WE COULD SELL SOME OF THE STUFF...TO NETFLIX.
MARLENE, YOU KNOW THIS TIME IS DIFFERENT.
I KNOW. HE...*HE'S* DIFFERENT.
I KNOW BECAUSE I'M ACTUALLY SCARED.
PLEASE, D-DON'T LET HER FORGET ME.
STOP.
YOU STOP.
PROMISE.
I PROMISE.


OOF!
KICK


MARC.
THANK YOU.
WITHOUT YOU, THIS WORLD... AND I...WOULD BE DOOMED.
I WOULD BE CONFINED TO A WHITE ROOM, SOILING MYSELF EVERY OTHER NIGHT, DREAMING OF COAL-DARK EMPTINESS TO STRIP MYSELF OF MY MEMORIES.
MY *CALLING.*
BUT YOU *EXISTED!*
YOU TRIED SO HARD TO CONTROL YOURSELF, ALL THE WHILE ENSURING YOUR SACRIFICE IN A RITUAL YOU COULDN'T EVEN BE AWARE OF.
THE DEATH OF ALL THINGS PATHETIC AND WISTFUL AND CONFUSED.
THE *REBIRTH OF THE SUN.*
SO, FIGHT LIKE YOU MEAN IT.
AND MAYBE IF YOU TRY AS HARD AS YOU CAN AND I FEEL IT'S GENUINE...
...I WON'T HUNT DOWN YOUR DAUGHTER AFTER I STRIP OFF YOUR FLESH.


RAAAAAA!!!
OOOF.
FWOOSH
GRRRRR!

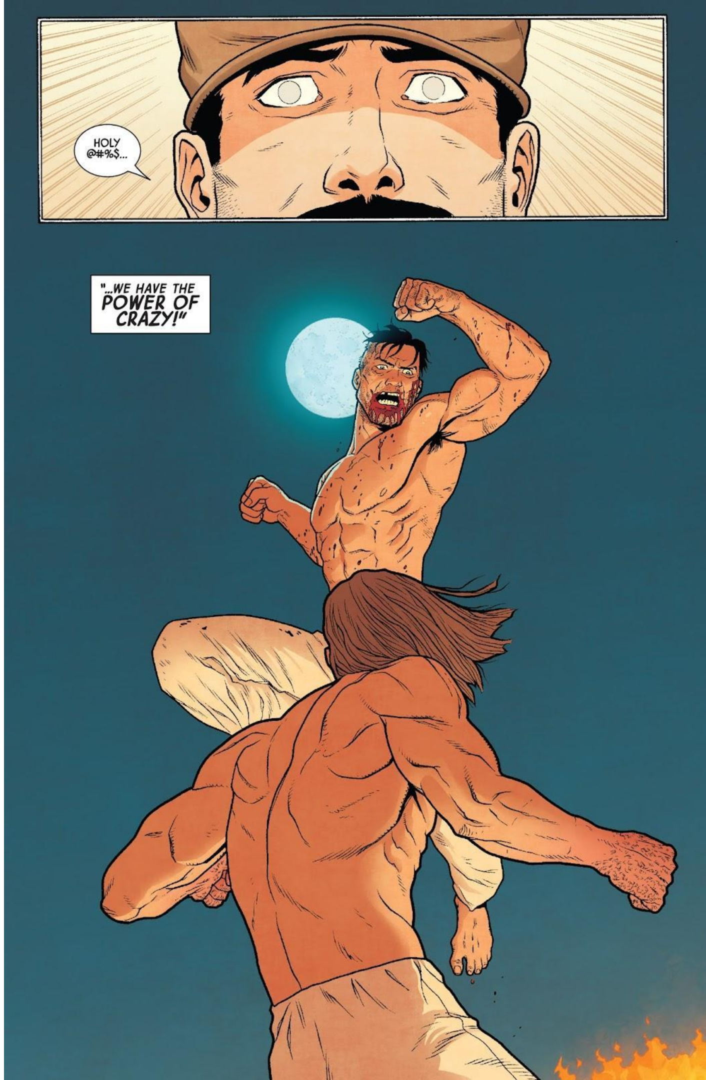

FWASH
AAAAH!
WHAM


FWASH
AND SO HERE WE ARE.
AT THE END.
NO!
NO.


WE HAVE TO DO SOMETHING, KHONSHU.
LOOK AROUND US. WE'RE JUST FAINT FIRINGS OF HIS SYNAPSES NOW.
HIS DEFENSE AGAINST THE DARKNESS, AS WE HAVE BEEN SINCE HIS CHILDHOOD, AND... OUR CONNECTION IS NEARLY SEVERED.
HE IS ALONE NOW, SAVE FOR DEATH ITSELF.
THIS IS TOTALLY $%^&.
AFTER ALL THE WORK HE PUT IN.
EVERYTHING HE'S BEEN THROUGH... AND I LET HIM KNOW DIATRICE, AND...
LOOK, ARE WE EVEN REAL? DID YOUR SUN GOD FATHER REALLY GIVE THAT PSYCHO POWERS OR IS HE JUST SOME MUTANT OR... INHUMAN WHO'S AS CRAZY AS US?
HAVEN'T YOU EVER *BELIEVED* IN SOMETHING?
I'M AS REAL TO MARC AS THE BOND OF MARRIAGE IS TO TWO LOVERS.
AS REAL AS THE STING OF MADNESS, A DRUG-INDUCED VISION.
AS REAL AS THE WILL TO DO ANYTHING BUT CURL UP AND DIE ON THE FLOOR.
AS REAL AS ANY STORY YOU'VE HEARD AND KNOWN AS TRUTH WITHOUT EVEN HAVING TO SEE.
AS IS RA.
HAVEN'T YOU EVER *BELIEVED* IN *SOMETHING?*
I...
...WAIT.


DIATRICE.

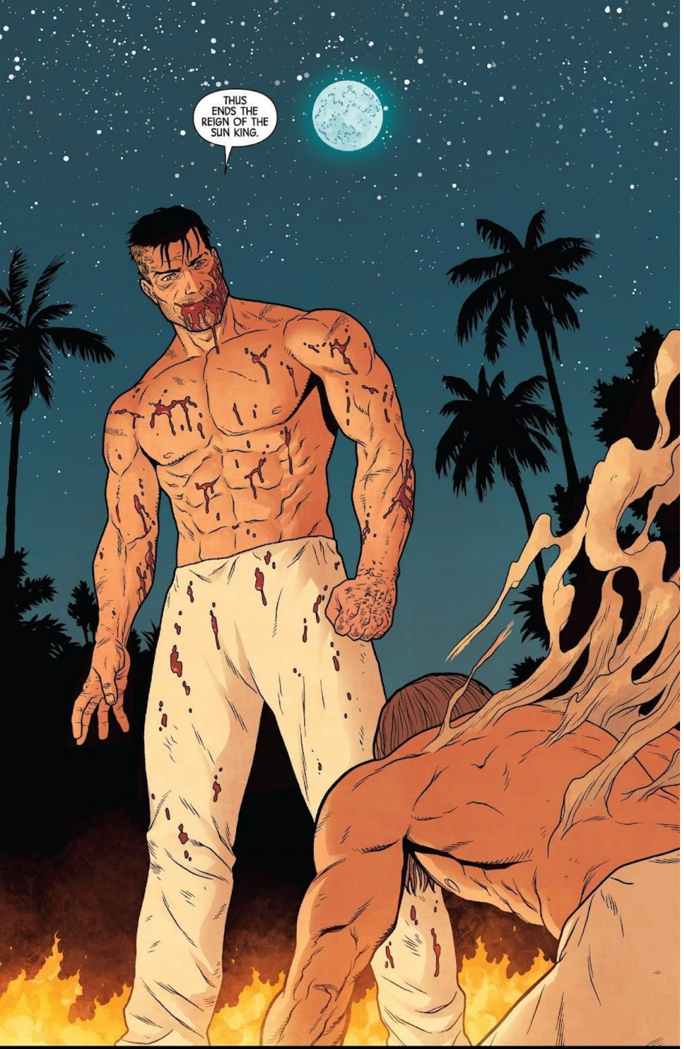

KHONSHU.
ARE YOU SAYING...NOT THAT WE'RE GETTING UNBELIEVABLY ABSTRACT HERE...
...IF SUN KING'S BELIEF IS A PART OF HIM, AND IN SOME WEIRD METATEXTUAL WAY RELATES TO HIS ABILITIES, THAT, IN A WAY...
...MARC HAS POWERS OF HIS OWN?
PERSISTENCE IN THE FACE OF DARKNESS? HIS INTELLIGENCE? HIS WILL?
THE TENACIOUS DURABILITY OF THE POOR GUY'S THICK SKIN?

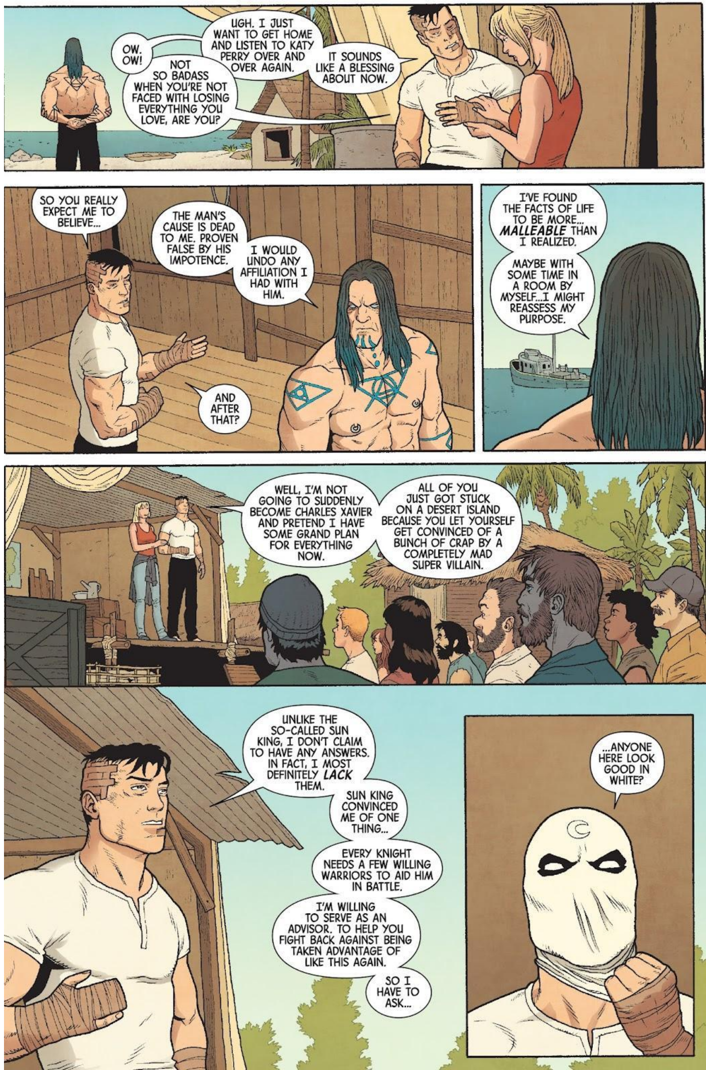

HOLY @#%$...
"...WE HAVE THE POWER OF CRAZY!"


CRACK
RA.
DO YOU FEAR ME YET?

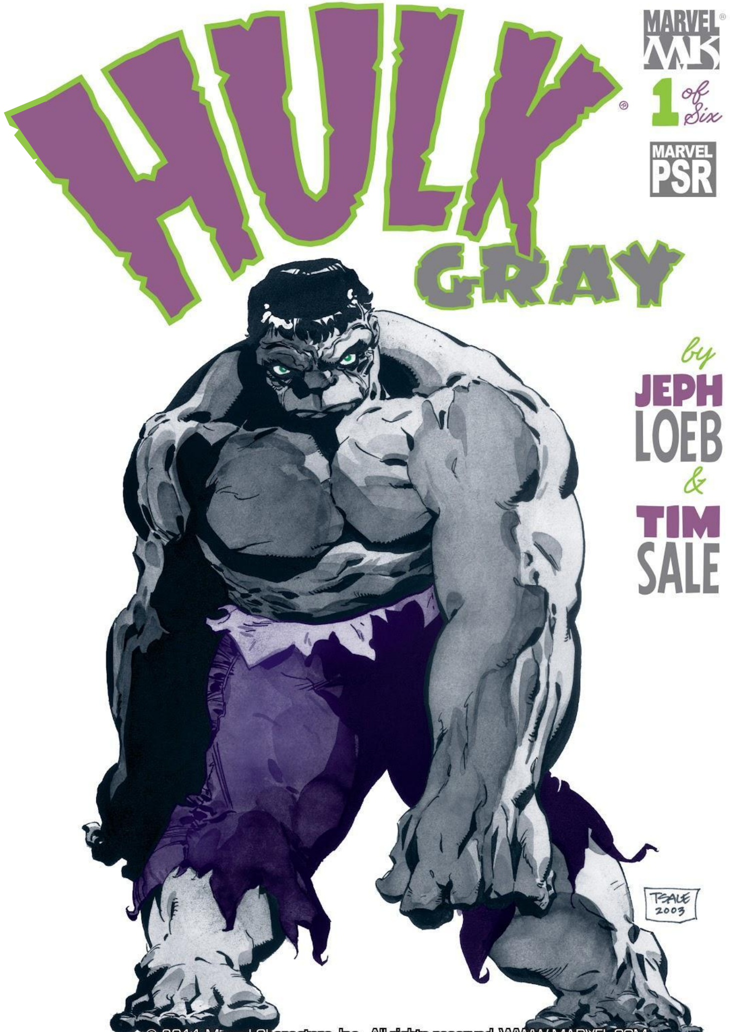

DO YOU FEAR ME?
FSSSS
DO YOU $%^& FEAR ME?!?!?!
Y-Y-YES...
FWOOSH
YEEEESSSSS.
NEVER TRUST A MADMAN TO DO A MERCENARY'S JOB.
THE FIRE. IT'S NOT WORKING.
I...I CAN'T...

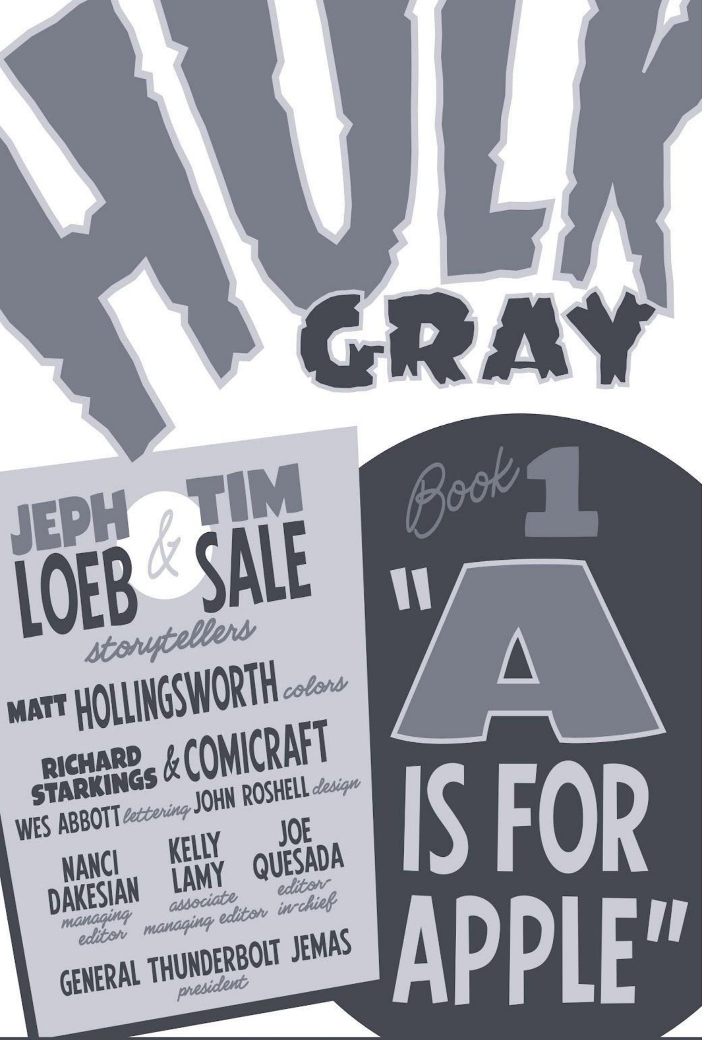

WHAT HAVE YOU DONE TO ME?
I CONVINCED YOU.
NOW *BOW BEFORE ME,* YOU HORRIBLE BASTARD.

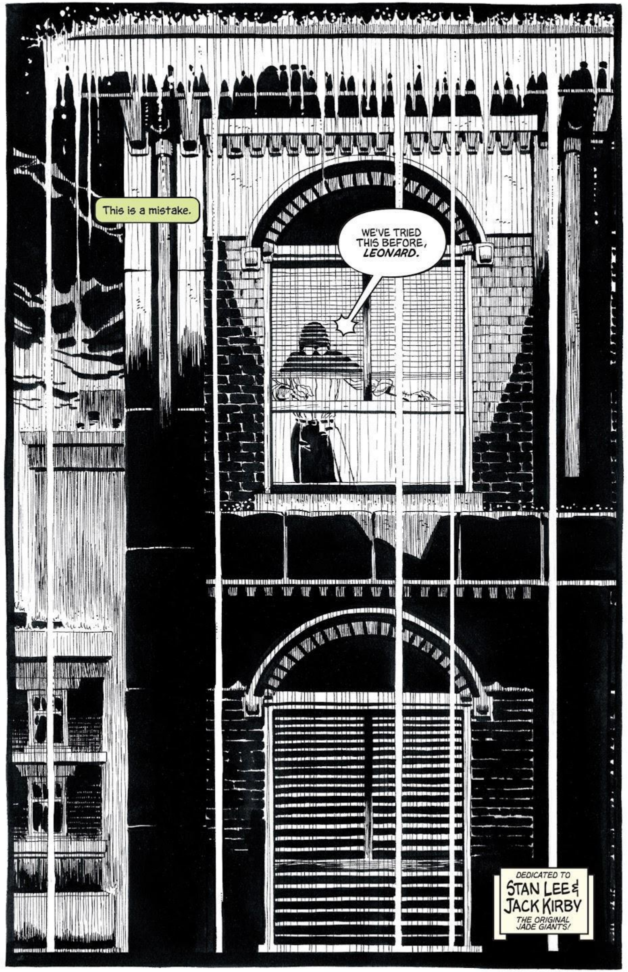

THUS ENDS THE REIGN OF THE SUN KING.


OW. OW!
UGH. I JUST WANT TO GET HOME AND LISTEN TO KATY PERRY OVER AND OVER AGAIN.
NOT SO BADASS WHEN YOU'RE NOT FACED WITH LOSING EVERYTHING YOU LOVE, ARE YOU?
IT SOUNDS LIKE A BLESSING ABOUT NOW.
SO YOU REALLY EXPECT ME TO BELIEVE...
THE MAN'S CAUSE IS DEAD TO ME, PROVEN FALSE BY HIS IMPOTENCE.
I WOULD UNDO ANY AFFILIATION I HAD WITH HIM.
AND AFTER THAT?
I'VE FOUND THE FACTS OF LIFE TO BE MORE... MALLEABLE THAN I REALIZED.
MAYBE WITH SOME TIME IN A ROOM BY MYSELF...I MIGHT REASSESS MY PURPOSE.
WELL, I'M NOT GOING TO SUDDENLY BECOME CHARLES XAVIER AND PRETEND I HAVE SOME GRAND PLAN FOR EVERYTHING NOW.
ALL OF YOU JUST GOT STUCK ON A DESERT ISLAND BECAUSE YOU LET YOURSELF GET CONVINCED OF A BUNCH OF CRAP BY A COMPLETELY MAD SUPER VILLAIN.
UNLIKE THE SO-CALLED SUN KING, I DON'T CLAIM TO HAVE ANY ANSWERS. IN FACT, I MOST DEFINITELY LACK THEM.
SUN KING CONVINCED ME OF ONE THING...
EVERY KNIGHT NEEDS A FEW WILLING WARRIORS TO AID HIM IN BATTLE.
I'M WILLING TO SERVE AS AN ADVISOR. TO HELP YOU FIGHT BACK AGAINST BEING TAKEN ADVANTAGE OF LIKE THIS AGAIN.
SO I HAVE TO ASK...
...ANYONE HERE LOOK GOOD IN WHITE?


I BELIEVE...
I BELIEVE...
YOUR DOCTOR BELIEVES, MARC!
END.


HULK
GRAY
MARVEL
MK
1 of Six
MARVEL PSR
by
JEPH LOEB
&
TIM SALE
T SALE 2003

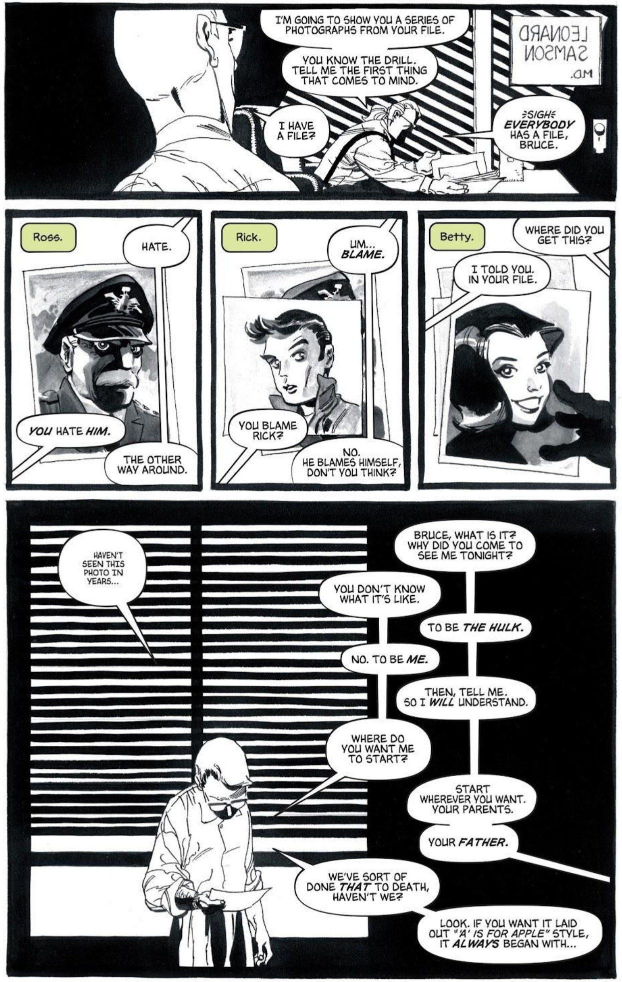

HULK
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GENERAL THUNDERBOLT JEMAS president
Book 1
"A IS FOR APPLE"


This is a mistake.
WE'VE TRIED THIS BEFORE, LEONARD.
DEDICATED TO STAN LEE & JACK KIRBY THE ORIGINAL JADE GIANTS!



I should keep moving. Whoever it is that is chasing me --
-- and it always is someone --
-- will know to look here.
Particularly on this day...
IT'S NOT THAT I DON'T APPRECIATE YOU SEEING ME ON A MOMENT'S NOTICE.
YOU CALLED, I CAME, BRUCE. IT'S HOW IT'S ALWAYS BEEN.
I DON'T KNOW... MAYBE I JUST WANTED SOMEONE TO TALK TO...
...OR SOMEPLACE TO GO TO GET OUT OF THE RAIN.
...What would've been -- should've been my wedding anniversary.
LEONARD
M.D.
DIPLOMA


PARDON MY FRENCH, BRUCE, BUT THAT'S THE BIGGEST PILE OF *MERDE* I'VE HEARD ALL DAY --
-- AND YOU CAN'T BELIEVE THE *MERDE* I HEAR.
YOU DIDN'T LEAP HALFWAY ACROSS THE COUNTRY TO GET OUT OF THE RAIN.
YOU WANTED TO TALK -- *TALK.*
Doctor Leonard Samson has been my friend for a long time.
I suppose it's not crazy to have a friend who's a psychiatrist.
Or to have a psychiatrist who's a friend.
I WOULDN'T TAKE THAT TONE WITH ME.
Like I'm in any position to determine who or what is crazy...
OOO, I'M SO SCARED, BRUCE.
YOU AREN'T AFRAID, LEONARD?
IF I WERE IN YOUR SHOES, *I* WOULD BE.
HELL, I'VE BEEN AFRAID ALL MY LIFE...

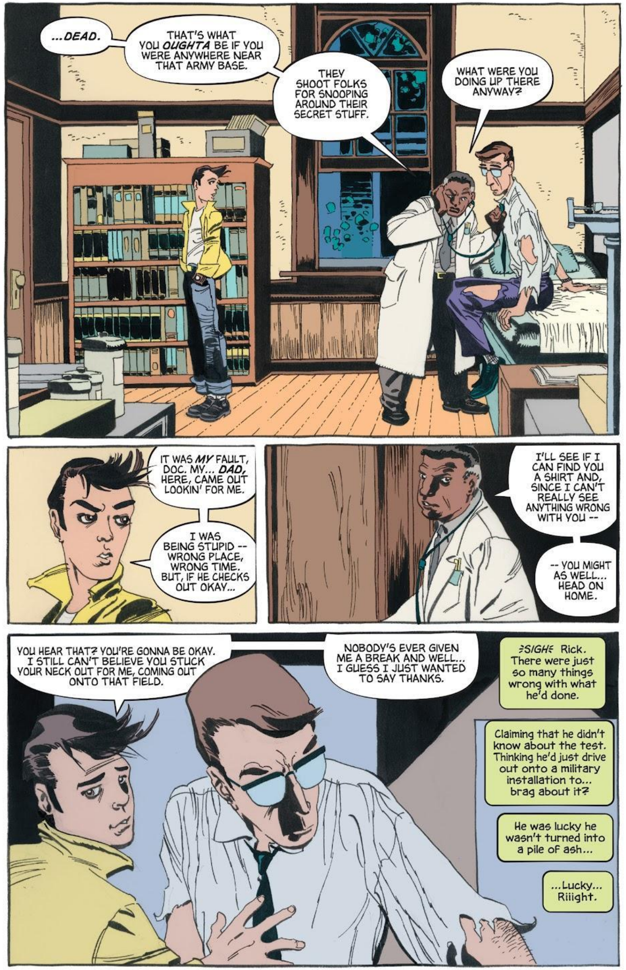

I'M GOING TO SHOW YOU A SERIES OF PHOTOGRAPHS FROM YOUR FILE.
YOU KNOW THE DRILL. TELL ME THE FIRST THING THAT COMES TO MIND.
LEONARD SAMSON M.D.
I HAVE A FILE?
SIGH *EVERYBODY* HAS A FILE, BRUCE.
Ross.
HATE.
YOU HATE *HIM.*
THE OTHER WAY AROUND.
Rick.
UM... *BLAME.*
YOU BLAME RICK?
NO. HE BLAMES HIMSELF, DON'T YOU THINK?
Betty.
WHERE DID YOU GET THIS?
I TOLD YOU. IN YOUR FILE.
HAVEN'T SEEN THIS PHOTO IN YEARS...
BRUCE, WHAT IS IT? WHY DID YOU COME TO SEE ME TONIGHT?
YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT IT'S LIKE.
TO BE *THE HULK.*
NO. TO BE *ME.*
THEN, TELL ME. SO I *WILL* UNDERSTAND.
WHERE DO YOU WANT ME TO START?
START WHEREVER YOU WANT. YOUR PARENTS.
YOUR *FATHER.*
WE'VE SORT OF DONE *THAT* TO DEATH, HAVEN'T WE?
LOOK. IF YOU WANT IT LAID OUT *"A" IS FOR APPLE"* STYLE, IT *ALWAYS* BEGAN WITH...


...The Gamma Bomb.


Ever had one of those nightmares, Leonard?
Where you're terrified and try to call for help?
And nothing comes out.
Nothing.


WHAT THE HELL JUST HAPPENED?!
WE JUST SET OFF POSSIBLY THE MOST POWERFUL WEAPON ON THE FACE OF THE EARTH --
-- WITH A MAN OUT THERE AT GROUND ZERO?!
WHAT THE HELL IS WRONG WITH YOU PEOPLE?
THE SECOND WE HAVE THE ALL CLEAR TO GO OUT THERE --
-- I WANT EVERY AVAILABLE MAN OUT THERE LOOKING FOR BANNER.
THIS COUNTRY IS NOT GOING TO LOSE AN ASSET --
DADDY...?
SOMETHING'S -- HAPPENED, HASN'T IT?
WHERE'S DOCTOR BANNER? WHERE IS BRUCE?
BETTY... YOU SHOULDN'T BE IN HERE NOW.
LET'S TAKE THIS OUT IN THE HALL.


Betty once told me that this was the moment her Father found out about... us.
In her hysteria, she revealed to the only man who had ever cared for her that she had feelings for me.
Given the nature of our relationship to come, it was fairly prophetic...
BETTY, YOU HAVE TO GET A HOLD OF YOURSELF. YOU'RE ONLY ALLOWED AT THIS FACILITY AS A COURTESY TO ME AND WE CAN'T --
WHERE IS HE, DADDY? WHY WASN'T BRUCE IN THE CONTROL ROOM?
I'M GOING TO HAVE YOU TAKEN HOME. GET YOU SOMETHING TO CALM YOU DOWN.
I DON'T WANT TO CALM DOWN! I WANT TO KNOW WHAT'S HAPPENED TO BRUCE!
WHEN YOU GET LIKE THIS... YOU REMIND ME OF YOUR MOTHER AND WE CAN'T HAVE THAT, BETTY.
YOU'RE A GENERAL'S DAUGHTER, DAMMIT.
YES, SIR.
ONLY...
...JUST TELL ME THE TRUTH, DADDY.
IT'S TOO SOON TO TELL, BUT... BANNER IS PROBABLY...


...DEAD.
THAT'S WHAT YOU OUGHTA BE IF YOU WERE ANYWHERE NEAR THAT ARMY BASE.
THEY SHOOT FOLKS FOR SNOOPING AROUND THEIR SECRET STUFF.
WHAT WERE YOU DOING UP THERE ANYWAY?
IT WAS MY FAULT, DOC. MY... DAD, HERE, CAME OUT LOOKIN' FOR ME.
I WAS BEING STUPID -- WRONG PLACE, WRONG TIME. BUT, IF HE CHECKS OUT OKAY...
I'LL SEE IF I CAN FIND YOU A SHIRT AND, SINCE I CAN'T REALLY SEE ANYTHING WRONG WITH YOU --
-- YOU MIGHT AS WELL... HEAD ON HOME.
YOU HEAR THAT? YOU'RE GONNA BE OKAY. I STILL CAN'T BELIEVE YOU STUCK YOUR NECK OUT FOR ME, COMING OUT ONTO THAT FIELD.
NOBODY'S EVER GIVEN ME A BREAK AND WELL... I GUESS I JUST WANTED TO SAY THANKS.
SIGH Rick. There were just so many things wrong with what he'd done.
Claiming that he didn't know about the test. Thinking he'd just drive out onto a military installation to... brag about it?
He was lucky he wasn't turned into a pile of ash...
...Lucky... Riiight.


YOU STUPID KID! IT'S NOT GOING TO BE OKAY! IT'S NEVER GOING TO BE OKAY.
I don't know what set me off. Maybe it was that Rick had lied and said I was his Father. And just the thought of my own Father...
THERE'LL BE THE ARMY LOOKING FOR ME AND HEARINGS AND INQUIRIES...
I SAVED YOUR LIFE, BUT IT'S RUINED MINE!
...or maybe it was that somewhere in my head, I knew what was coming. That awful feeling of dread that something is bothering you, but you can't tell what it is...
NO ONE COULD TAKE THAT MUCH GAMMA RADIATION AND LIVE. SOMETHING'S GOING TO HAPPEN.
SOMETHING... BAD.
WHAT'RE YOU TALKING ABOUT? YOU'RE HERE, AREN'T YOU?
AND IF YOU'RE AFRAID OF THE BIG BAD ARMY, IT'S ALMOST DARK -- WE'LL SLIP OUT OF HERE.
NO!


NO.
NO.
NO.
DUDE.
WHAT *ARE* YOU?!


THE STRONGEST THERE IS.



MAN, YOU'RE LIKE SOME KIND OF *HULKING* --
HULK.
Gray.
I wasn't green at first.
I've heard some theories about that over the years. I have some of my own, Leonard...
...but I digress...
OKAY. NOT BIG IN THE VOCABULARY DEPARTMENT NOW.
LOOK, I DON'T KNOW WHAT THE HECK IS GOING ON --
-- BUT IT DOESN'T TAKE A ROCKET SCIENTIST TO FIGURE OUT THAT DOCTOR ISN'T GETTING YOU A SHIRT --
-- NOT THAT ONE WOULD FIT --
-- BUT THE *ARMY* IS GONNA BUST IN HERE IN ABOUT --
ARMY BAD.
BRAAK
GO.
AWAY.
Why does a man who could've used his brain to find a cure for cancer...



WAIT -- !
AW, MAN... WE ARE *TOTALLY* SCREWED...
...to find a way to help mankind...
...build a weapon of mass destruction?
THOOM!
Maybe that's why I could never be seen as the hero.
GET LIGHT OUT OF HULK'S EYES!

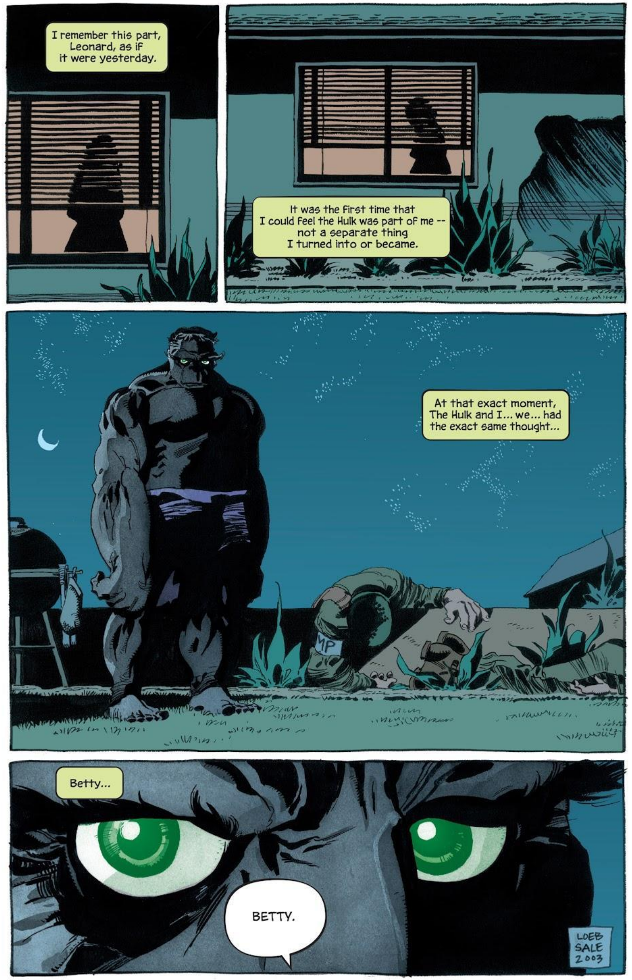

Maybe this was the price I had to pay for unleashing the Gamma Bomb into the world.
HULK SMASH!
MP

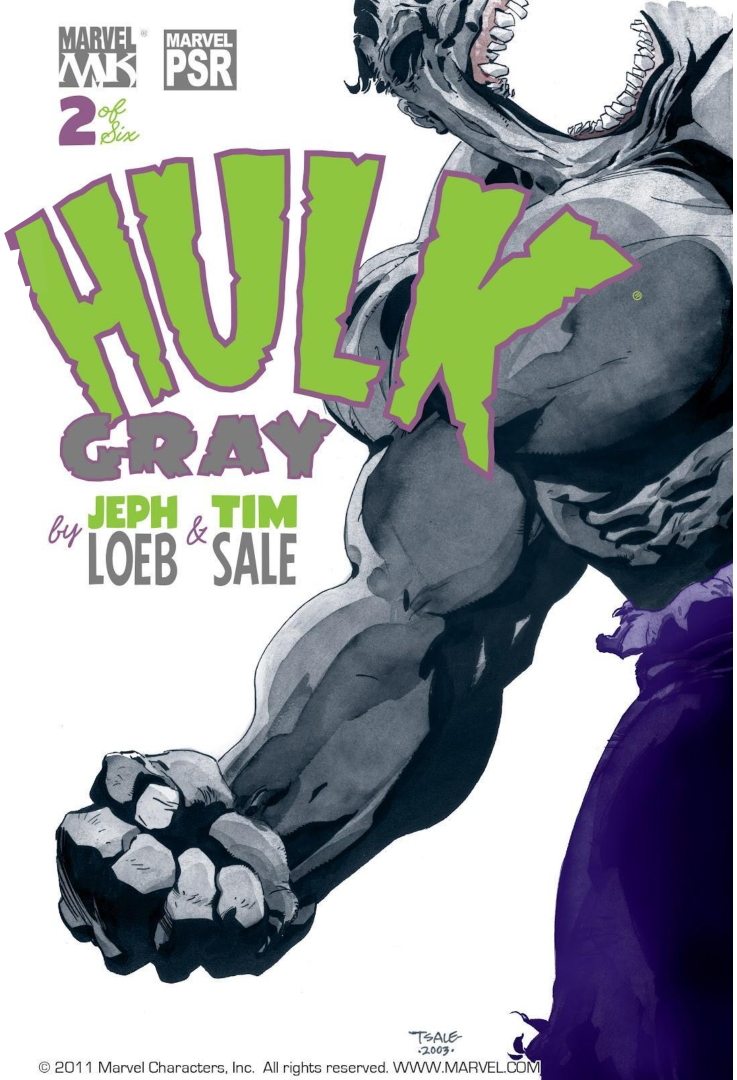

BLAM!
BLAM!
BLAM!
GRUCH
GAH!
STOP.
LEAVE.
HULK.
P-PLEASE...


PLEASE... I'VE GOT A WIFE...
ALONE.
PUT THAT MAN DOWN!
BOOM
BAH.


WHAROOM
LEAVE HULK ALONE.
From that single incident, Leonard... we were at war with the Army.


WHAT? WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?
SOME KIND OF MONSTER?
A BEAR?
THEN, WHAT THE HELL IS IT?!
NEVER MIND. I'M COMING IN.
BETTY.
I THOUGHT YOU'D GONE TO BED.
I HEARD YOU YELLING.
NOW, LISTEN TO ME CLOSELY.
I WANT YOU TO STAY INSIDE. KEEP THE DOORS LOCKED. I'LL HAVE TWO MP'S STATIONED OUTSIDE IN THE YARD --
-- IS IT ABOUT BRUCE? IS BRUCE ALIVE?
SOMEONE MATCHING BANNER'S DESCRIPTION WAS SEEN AT A CLINIC IN TOWN. BUT...
BETTY... SOMETHING... WE DON'T KNOW WHAT YET... TORE THROUGH THE PLACE AND --
-- IF BANNER WAS THERE, HE'S GONE NOW.
DON'T FORGET TO LOCK THE DOORS.


I remember this part, Leonard, as if it were yesterday.
It was the first time that I could feel the Hulk was part of me -- not a separate thing I turned into or became.
At that exact moment, The Hulk and I... we... had the exact same thought...
MP
Betty...
BETTY.
LOEB SALE 2003


MARVEL
MARVEL PSR
2 of Six
HULK
GRAY
by JEPH LOEB & TIM SALE
TSALE 2003
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HULK GRAY

Book 2

"B IS FOR BOY"

JEPH LOEB & TIM SALE
storytellers

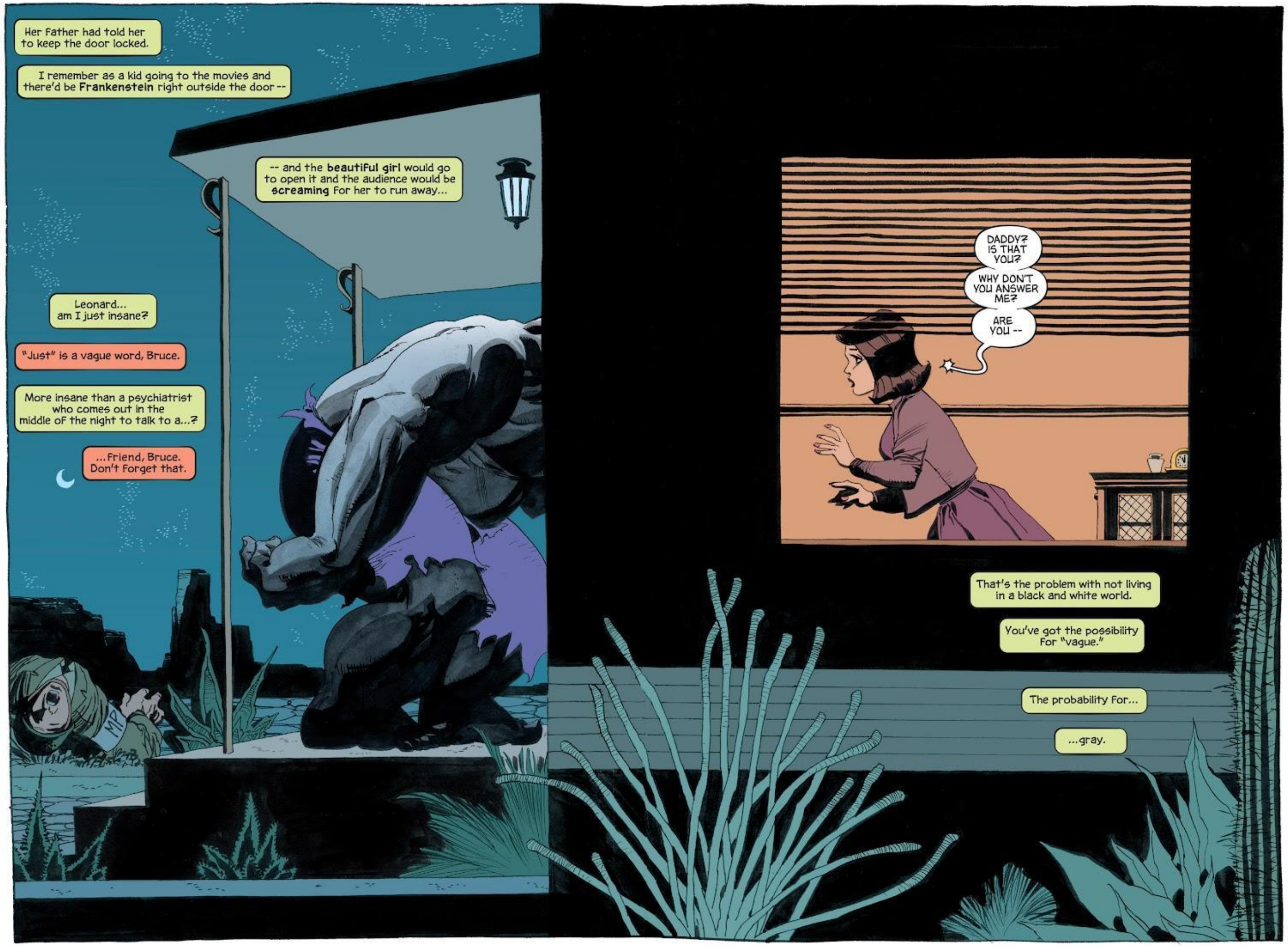
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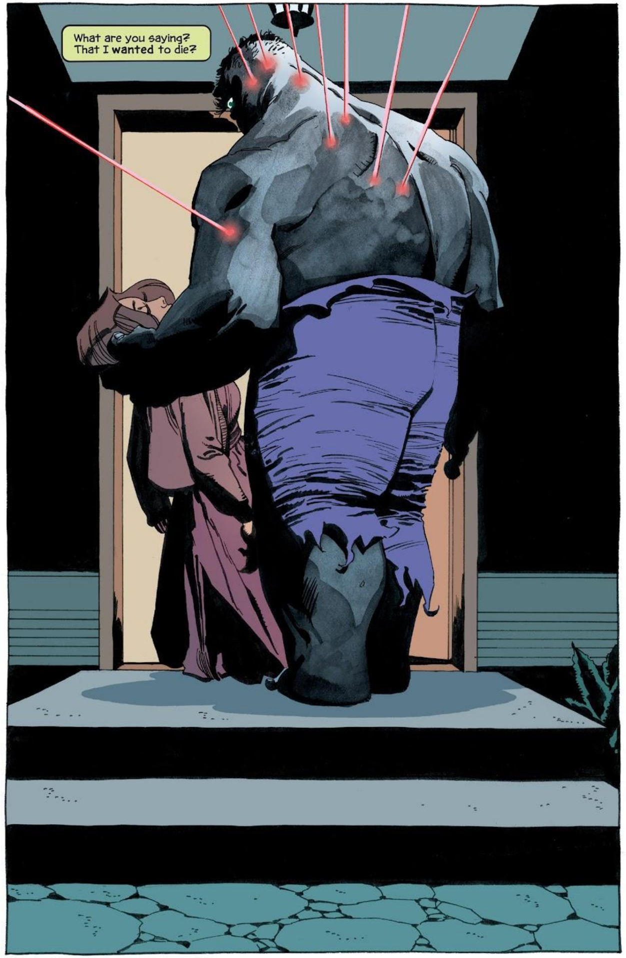
GENERAL THUNDERBOLT JEMAS *president*




Her father had told her to keep the door locked.
I remember as a kid going to the movies and there'd be Frankenstein right outside the door --
-- and the beautiful girl would go to open it and the audience would be screaming for her to run away...
Leonard... am I just insane?
"Just" is a vague word, Bruce.
More insane than a psychiatrist who comes out in the middle of the night to talk to a...?
...Friend, Bruce. Don't forget that.
DADDY? IS THAT YOU?
WHY DON'T YOU ANSWER ME?
ARE YOU --
That's the problem with not living in a black and white world.
You've got the possibility for "vague."
The probability for...
...gray.


-- HURT...
Why did she open the door, Leonard?
BETTY.
I suppose the Hulk -- I -- could've -- would've torn the front of the house off to get to her.
But... Betty wouldn't... couldn't have known that. Not back then.
Why the hell would she do it, Leonard?!
Why does a man who created one of the world's greatest weapons of mass destruction, run out onto the testing field...
...with the countdown seconds away from launch?
YOU CAN SPEAK? I MEAN, OF COURSE, YOU CAN SPEAK, YOU JUST SPOKE, BUT --
-- HOW DO YOU KNOW MY NAME?
WHAT KIND OF THING ARE YOU?
NOT THING.
HULK.


YOU'RE THAT MONSTER EVERYONE IS OUT LOOKING FOR.
MY FATHER TOLD ME ABOUT YOU. HOW YOU TORE THROUGH THE PLACE WHERE BRUCE WAS FOUND.
WHERE IS DOCTOR BANNER?
WHERE IS BRUCE?
WHAT HAVE YOU DONE TO HIM?!
BAP
BAP
BETTY WANT BANNER.
HULK HATE BANNER.
They were supposed to halt the launch. They were told to stop.
...BRUCE...
And Betty was told not to open the door.
I... went out there to help Rick.
Why? You didn't know the boy. He put himself in harm's way. And in... what? Six seconds, he'd have been an ashtray and no one the wiser. Nobody would miss some orphan kid who --
We're talking about a human life, Leonard!
So... it wasn't okay for Rick to die, but you on the other hand...


What are you saying? That I wanted to die?


PUT THE GIRL DOWN!
You're the one with the guilt of having built the bomb, Bruce. You tell me.
DAMMIT... HE'S GOT BETTY.
I THINK WE CAN TAKE THE SHOT, SIR.
SAY THE WORD, GENERAL, AND WE'LL DROP HIM.
SIR? AWAITING YOUR COMMAND...
But... what about Betty? She was young and beautiful and had everything to live for.
And her Father had told her that the man she loved was more than likely dead.
I...
Her Father...
ROSS.
Talk about living in a world of black and white...
WHAT THE HELL?! HE KNOWS ME...


TAKE HIM.
TH-DOOM
He was going to let those idiots fire on me.


He had heard the reports that bullets would bounce off my -- The Hulk's skin and still... with Betty that close...
...and I was the monster.
IF YOU HARM ONE HAIR ON MY DAUGHTER'S HEAD --
-- I'LL KILL YOU MYSELF. WITH MY OWN TWO HANDS.
ROSS BAD MAN.
LEAVE HULK ALONE!


YOU'D BETTER RUN.
COME INTO *MY* YARD.
HURT *MY* MEN...
BAH.
TOUCH MY LITTLE GIRL...
GENERAL -- SHE'S COMING AROUND. SHE'S GOING TO BE ALL RIGHT!
UGNNN...
I WANT ***EVERY AVAILABLE PIECE OF EQUIPMENT*** UP AND RUNNING AFTER THAT BEAST.
WE'LL SHOW THAT -- ***HULK*** -- WHAT IT'S LIKE TO MESS WITH THIS MAN'S ARMY!
How small that first night must've made Ross feel...

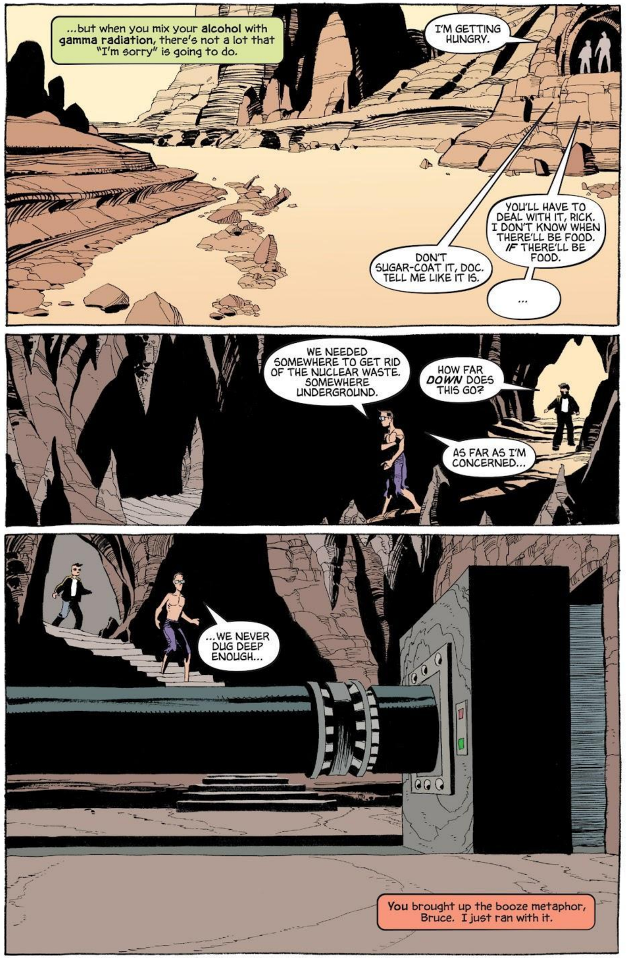

BETTY...?
Karen Lee Ross
Thorazine
Take orally as needed
Dr Donald Ashcroft
I'VE GIVEN YOU SOMETHING TO HELP YOU SLEEP.
I FOUND IT IN THE BACK OF THE MEDICINE CHEST. IT WAS AN OLD PRESCRIPTION OF YOUR ***MOTHER'S.***
SHE'D TAKE IT WHEN SHE... GOT OVER-EXCITED.
I'M SURE I COULD GET IT REFILLED HERE ON THE BASE.
NO ONE WOULD NEED TO KNOW...
I DIDN'T REALIZE YOU STILL HAD THIS...
DO YOU REMEMBER? MY TAKING YOU OUT TO WATCH SPRING TRAINING... TO WATCH THE DODGERS?
YOU ACTUALLY WANTED TO ***PLAY*** BASEBALL WHEN YOU WERE LITTLE.
ASKING WHY GIRLS CAN'T BE SOLDIERS...
I ALWAYS THOUGHT WE'D HAVE MORE CHILDREN. A ***BOY.***
BUT, YOUR MOTHER...
THERE ARE DAYS WHEN YOU ***LOOK*** JUST LIKE HER.
AND I ***WORRY*** THAT YOU'LL BE...
...***JUST*** LIKE HER...

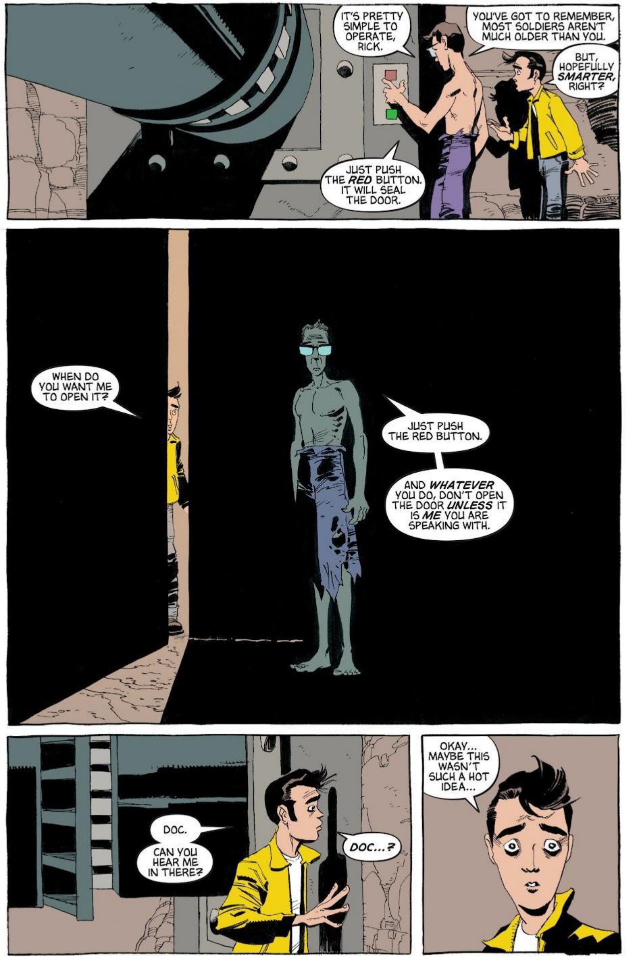

BETTY.
IF YOU HAVE ANY INFORMATION... ANYTHING AT ALL...
I MEAN... THE HULK CAME HERE.
PEOPLE ARE GOING TO ASK WHY.
GET SOME REST.
I'll never understand how a woman with so much heart could come from a home that had none to give...


DOC!
DOCTOR BANNER!
The next day...
The next day, Leonard, in some ways was worse than the night before.
Rick's voice -- when he found me -- he sounded like he was a million miles away. As if my brain was shut down, lost in a fog...
DOC --
OH, MAN, C'MON -- DON'T BE DEAD -- DON'T BE --
My eyes were all jellied. My tongue was dry. My stomach roiling.
It was like the worst hangover in the world times ten.
GOTTA GET YOU UP--
GOTTA --
LEAVE ME ALONE!
RICK...?
WHERE...
HOW DID YOU FIND ME?


ACTUALLY, DOC, IT WASN'T THAT HARD.


OH.
Bruce... you said the next day was worse. Other than how you felt physically, how was it worse?
LOOK, I'M NOT EVEN GOING TO PRETEND TO UNDERSTAND HOW YOU... HULK OUT.
BUT I THINK IT'S PRETTY SAFE TO SAY THAT IF I CAN FIND YOU, WE'VE GOT NO TIME BEFORE THE ARMY DOES.
I'VE GOT AN AUNT, AT LEAST I THINK SHE'S MY AUNT AND --
NO.
I'M NOT GOING TO ENDANGER ANYONE ELSE'S LIFE.
EVERY PERSON I'VE EVER DEPENDED ON HAS WALKED OUT ON ME.
YOU SAVED MY LIFE. I OWE YOU. SO, UNTIL YOU GET A HANDLE ON THIS THING...
...I COME WITH THE DINNER. GOT IT?
Have you ever gotten roaring drunk, Leonard?
Wrecked the car? Cheated on your wife? Woken up next to some woman whose name you can't remember?
Everybody makes mistakes, Bruce.
The hard part is coming to terms with what you've done. You make restitution. You help those you've hurt.
Hate to burst your 12-step bubble, Leonard...
I KNOW A PLACE.


...but when you mix your alcohol with gamma radiation, there's not a lot that "I'm sorry" is going to do.
I'M GETTING HUNGRY.
YOU'LL HAVE TO DEAL WITH IT, RICK. I DON'T KNOW WHEN THERE'LL BE FOOD. IF THERE'LL BE FOOD.
DON'T SUGAR-COAT IT, DOC. TELL ME LIKE IT IS.
...
WE NEEDED SOMEWHERE TO GET RID OF THE NUCLEAR WASTE. SOMEWHERE UNDERGROUND.
HOW FAR DOWN DOES THIS GO?
AS FAR AS I'M CONCERNED...
...WE NEVER DUG DEEP ENOUGH...
You brought up the booze metaphor, Bruce. I just ran with it.



IT'S PRETTY SIMPLE TO OPERATE, RICK.
YOU'VE GOT TO REMEMBER, MOST SOLDIERS AREN'T MUCH OLDER THAN YOU.
BUT, HOPEFULLY SMARTER, RIGHT?
JUST PUSH THE RED BUTTON. IT WILL SEAL THE DOOR.
WHEN DO YOU WANT ME TO OPEN IT?
JUST PUSH THE RED BUTTON.
AND WHATEVER YOU DO, DON'T OPEN THE DOOR UNLESS IT IS ME YOU ARE SPEAKING WITH.
DOC.
CAN YOU HEAR ME IN THERE?
DOC...?
OKAY... MAYBE THIS WASN'T SUCH A HOT IDEA...

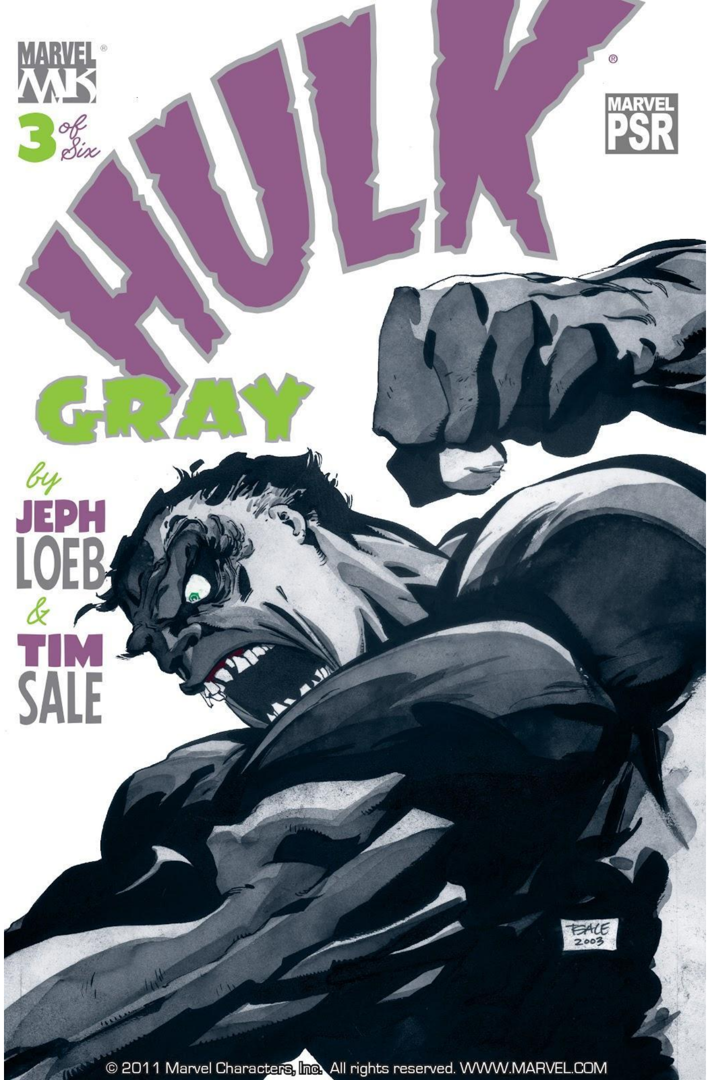


DOC...?


DOCTOR BANNER.
LOOK, MAYBE IF WE GOT HELP --
THUMP
DOC! LISTEN TO ME!
WE...
LET HULK OUT.
THUMP


DOC! CALM DOWN! I CAN'T --
THUMP
BANNER!
LET HULK OUT!
OUT OF DARK!
THUMP
DOC -- PLEASE, YOU ASKED ME TO DO THIS FOR YOU.
THIS WASN'T MY IDEA!
I'M SO TOTALLY SCREWED.
THUMP
THOOM
OUT!


THUMP
THUMP
THUMP
WHEN HULK IS OUT --
--HULK WILL SMASH!
THUMP
THUMP
THUMP
To this day, Leonard, I couldn't tell you who was more frightened right then.
Rick.
Or me...
LOEB SALE ·2003·


MARVEL
3 of Six
HULK
MARVEL PSR
GRAY
by
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&
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SALE 2003

HULK GRAY

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Book 3

"C IS FOR CRY"




GRAY.
LIKE HULK.


SOFT.
NOT LIKE HULK.
FRIEND STAY.
WET?

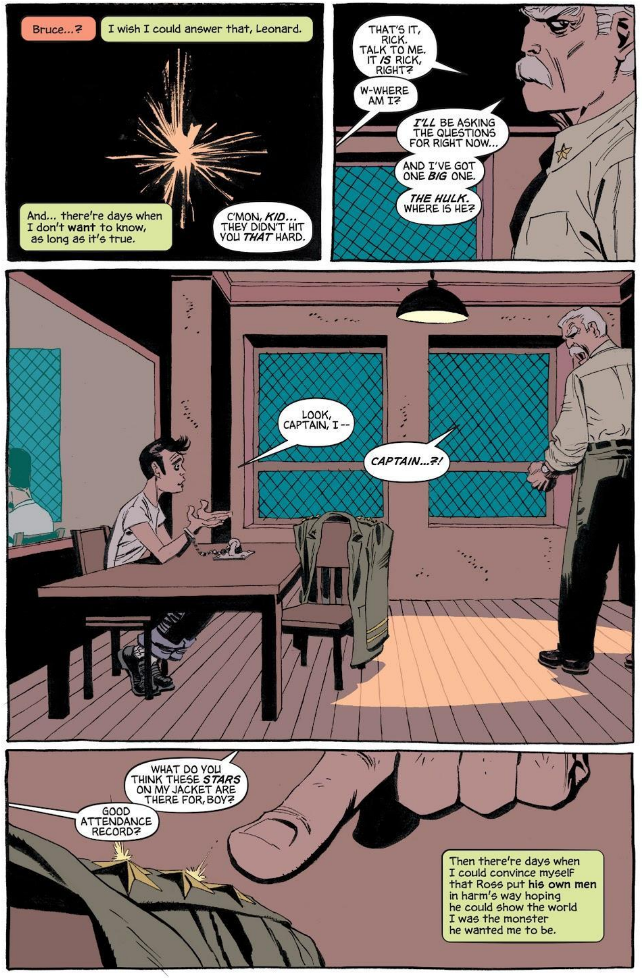

WHY FRIEND WET?
FRIEND...?
HULK ALONE AGAIN.
ROSS SAY HULK AM MONSTER.


HULK NOT MONSTER!
KTHOOM


Bruce... why did you tell me that story?
Hmmm? Why? I don't know, Leonard. I just remembered it.
Oh.
KKKRRRAAAAACKK
Sigh
Don't do that, Leonard.
Don't do what, Bruce?
That condescending psycho-babble claptrap where you act like I'm an idiot for not telling you why I've told you something when I really don't know.
You got all that from an "Oh"?


Look, Bruce, you come all the way out here in the middle of the night, pouring rain, and you say you want to talk.
And out of the myriad of things we've discussed, you pull a rabbit tale out of your hat --
-- sorry... even psychiatrists can say things that are unintentionally funny...
...and yes, I'd like to know why...
RRRUMMMBBBLLLE
I think...
I know it was the first time the Hulk actually killed anything.
Still... at least in the way you told the story, The Hulk, meaning you, was innocent.
Leonard.
The Hulk was... is ... many things...
...but none of them is innocent...


WHAT D'YA WANT WITH ME?
I DIDN'T DO ANYTHING!
YOU GUYS WANT TO GET THOSE GUNS OUT OF MY FACE?
I MAY NOT HAVE A LOT OF BRAINS, BUT WHAT I'VE GOT I'D RATHER NOT HAVE SPLATTERED ALL OVER --
-- WHERE IS HE?
HE? HE WHO?
YOU KNOW WHO WE MEAN.
Yes... It's one of the... improbable things about your alter ego. All that destruction... The buildings, the hardware, the millions of dollars that the Army spent trying to bring you in --
-- That was the Army's choice, not mine, Leonard.
Why do you think no one ever got killed, Bruce?
CAN'T SAY I DO... UNLESS YOU WANNA BE MORE SPECIFIC.
OKAY, KID, HAVE IT YOUR WAY.
SEE ANYTHING?
NOPE... AND JUST BETWEEN US...
LET'S GET BACK TO BASE ASAP AND KEEP IT THAT WAY...



Bruce...?
I wish I could answer that, Leonard.
And... there're days when I don't want to know, as long as it's true.
C'MON, KID... THEY DIDN'T HIT YOU THAT HARD.
THAT'S IT, RICK. TALK TO ME. IT IS RICK, RIGHT?
W-WHERE AM I?
I'LL BE ASKING THE QUESTIONS FOR RIGHT NOW...
AND I'VE GOT ONE BIG ONE.
THE HULK. WHERE IS HE?
LOOK, CAPTAIN, I --
CAPTAIN...?!
WHAT DO YOU THINK THESE STARS ON MY JACKET ARE THERE FOR, BOY?
GOOD ATTENDANCE RECORD?
Then there're days when I could convince myself that Ross put his own men in harm's way hoping he could show the world I was the monster he wanted me to be.



SMART ALEC.
GUESS YOU WEREN'T SO SMART WHEN YOU PARKED YOUR BUTT OUT ON THE GAMMA BOMB TESTING RANGE.
WERE YOU?
I'D HATE TO COUNT THE NUMBER OF FEDERAL LAWS YOU BROKE WITH THAT LITTLE STUNT.
WE'D CALL YOUR PARENTS, BUT, THAT'S RIGHT, YOU'RE AN ORPHAN. SO, NOBODY'S GOING TO MISS A LITTLE SNOT LIKE YOU.
YOU WANT TO CUT TO THE CHASE, PAL? OR IS THIS "BAD-COP, WORSE-COP" ROUTINE ALL YOU GOT?
ONE OF THIS NATION'S MOST PRIZED ASSETS IS DOCTOR BRUCE BANNER.
NO ONE HAS HEARD A PEEP FROM HIM SINCE THE HULK TORE THROUGH THAT CLINIC IN TOWN.
AND SINCE YOU TOOK BANNER TO THAT CLINIC -- POSING AS HIS "SON," WASN'T IT? -- IF HE DOESN'T MAKE AN APPEARANCE PRETTY DAMN QUICK --
-- WE'RE GOING TO ASSUME BANNER IS DEAD, THE HULK KILLED HIM AND THAT MAKES YOU AN ACCESSORY TO MURDER.
AND WHEN DOCTOR BANNER SHOWS UP WON'T YOU LOOK LIKE A JACKASS.
ONE WAY OR ANOTHER YOU'RE GOING TO TELL US EVERYTHING YOU KNOW ABOUT THE HULK!
THEN, IT'S GONNA BE AN INCREDIBLY SHORT CONVERSATION 'CAUSE I DON'T KNOW JACK ABOUT ANY "HULK."
PEOPLE HAVE SEEN THE TWO OF YOU TOGETHER. YOU'VE GOT NO PLACE LEFT TO RUN.
YOU.
AND THE MONSTER.
YEAH, WELL, I'VE NEVER EVEN HEARD OF THIS HULK.


WHY DO YOU CARE ABOUT THE HULK?
HE'D JUST AS SOON *KILL* YOU --
YOU'VE GOT IT SO WRONG IT ISN'T EVEN FUNNY.
THE HULK DOESN'T WANT TO KILL *ANYBODY*.
HE JUST WANTS TO BE LEFT ALONE!
NEVER HEARD OF HIM, HMM...
I'M GOING TO GET SOME COFFEE.
YOU WANT ANYTHING? CIGARETTE? *SODA POP?*
GO TO HELL.
I'll bet you if we counted up how many lives The Hulk has made miserable, it wouldn't come close to the damage that Ross has done.
I wouldn't take that bet, Bruce, if it's all the same to you. But, this isn't about "how many" lives, is it? Aren't we just talking about **one** person?


You mean... me?
No... I was thinking more like...
TOUGH KID.
HE'S A *PUNK*.
THEY'RE *ALL* PUNKS UNTIL THEY GROW UP AND GO INTO THE ARMY.
I NEVER WENT INTO THE ARMY.
MY POINT EXACTLY.
DADDY...?
Betty...
WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE? YOU SHOULD BE HOME -- RESTING.
I... I DON'T FEEL SAFE THERE. THE HULK HAS ALREADY BEEN TO THE HOUSE ONCE AND --
-- DADDY... ISN'T THAT
PROBABLY.
WHAT'S *HE* DOING HERE?
THAT'S CLASSIFIED.
YOU SHOULDN'T EVEN BE IN THIS PART OF THE BUILDING, BETTY.
YOU SHOULD KNOW BY NOW THAT NO ONE'S GOING TO SAY *"NO"* TO THE GENERAL'S DAUGHTER.
FINE. LOOK, HE'S HERE TO HELP US BRING DOWN THE HULK. HE'S SOMETHING OF AN EXPERT IN THE AREA OF MUNITIONS...
...AND HE *CLAIMS* TO HAVE SOMETHING *NEW* THAT CAN STOP THE HULK.
AND FIND DOCTOR BANNER? HAS THERE BEEN ANY WORD ON *BRUCE?*
THAT'S WHAT WE INTEND TO FIND OUT.


OUT!
If you're talking about who I think you're talking about, why haven't I ever heard about this? Has it been kept classified?
Let's just say, it was in everyone's best interest to keep it on a "Need To Know" basis...
...and evidently, Dr. Leonard Samson, PhD, M.D. doesn't need to know.
WHOOMPH

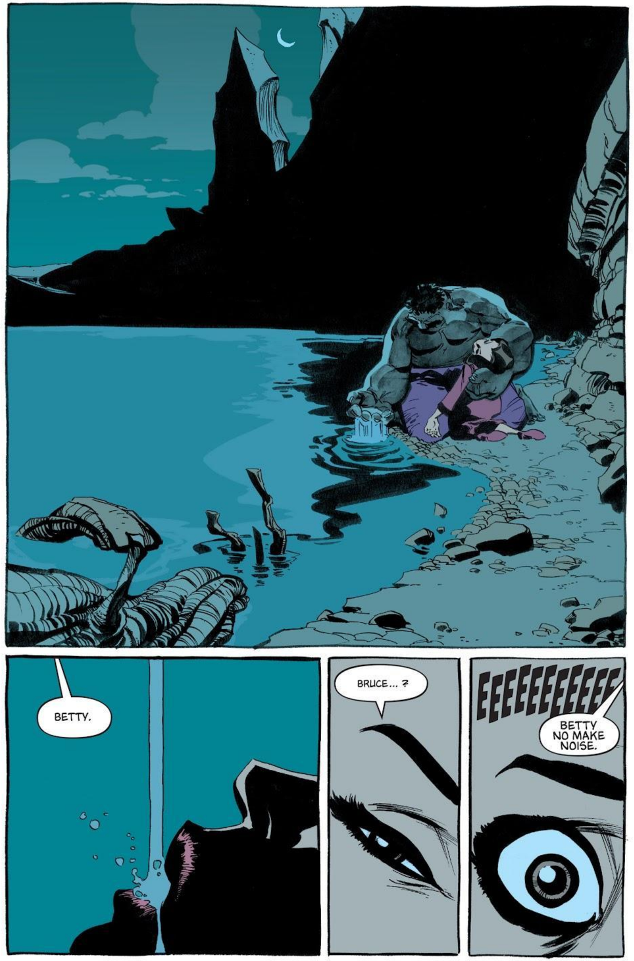

RICK.
RICK!
ARMY TRUCK.
ARMY BAD.
Even in those days... especially in those days... they had no idea who or what they were dealing with...


I'M GETTING HUNGRY.
TELL US WHAT WE WANT TO KNOW. THEN, YOU CAN EAT.
BITE ME.
YOU'RE THE DAUGHTER? MUST BE TOUGH.
WHAT WOULD YOU KNOW ABOUT IT?
JUST TRYING TO BE FRIENDLY.
I'M TIRED OF YOUR INSUBORDINATION! NOW, YOU'RE GOING TO TELL ME --
He hit Rick? A civilian? A minor?!
Try not to act too surprised, Leonard.
DADDY -- THAT'S ENOUGH!
BETTY -- GET OUT OF --
BDOOM

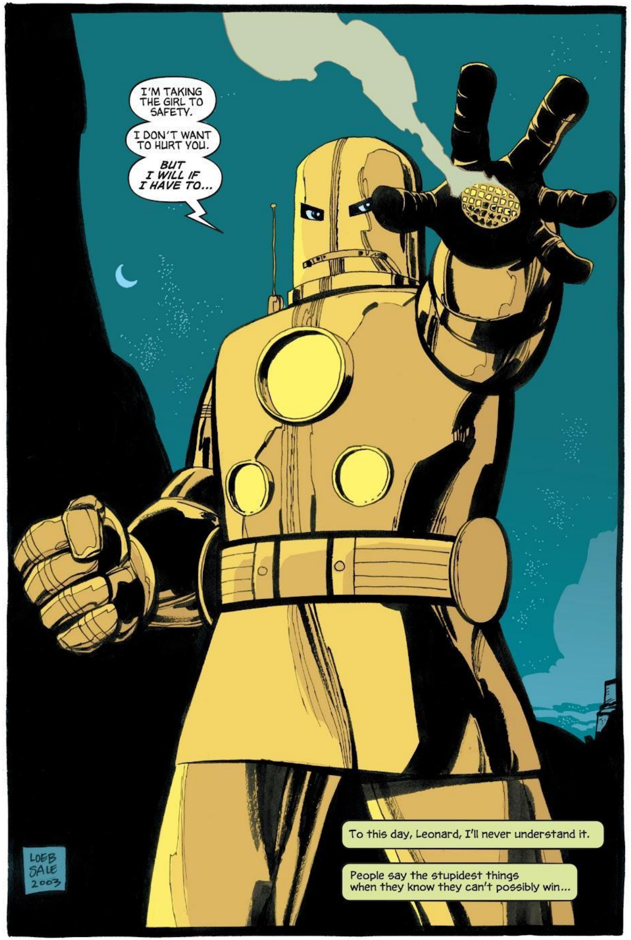

HULK SMASH!
OH MY --
DUDE. NICE ENTRANCE.

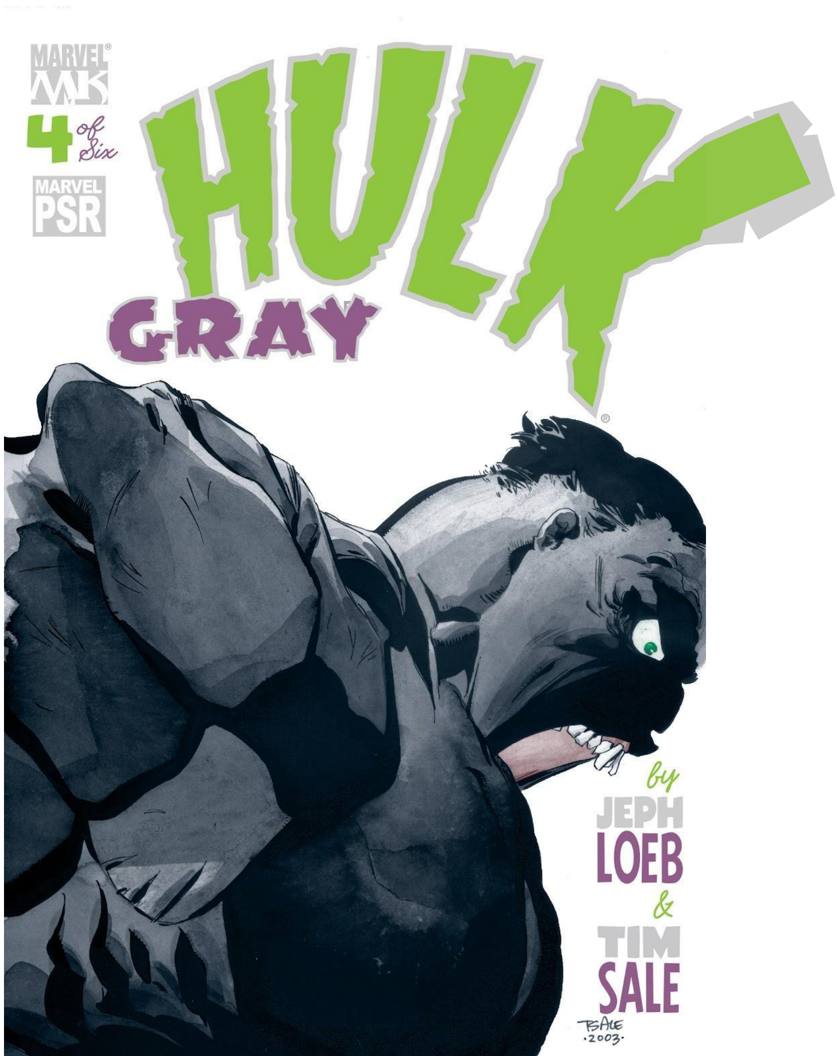

YOU TOOK A BIG CHANCE COMING HERE.
RICK HULK'S FRIEND.
SNAKL
UH... YEAH. THEN, LET'S GET OUTTA HERE.
YES. JUST GO, YOU STUPID MONSTER -- BEFORE *SOMEONE ELSE* GETS HURT!
OKAY... LEAVING... *NOW.*
BETTY.
STOP SAYING MY NAME LIKE YOU KNOW ME!
YOU DO NOT KNOW ME!


STOP!
OKAY, RICK. TIME TO ADIOS!
KRASH
WELL, GENERAL ROSS, I CAN SEE WE SHARE A COMMON PROBLEM.
CREDIBILITY.
THE ARMY BRASS DOESN'T THINK *YOU* CAN CATCH THIS... HULK.
AND *YOU* DON'T THINK *I* CAN DO IT.
HOW 'BOUT I GIVE IT A SHOT AND *SOLVE* THE PROBLEM FOR *BOTH* OF US?


BETTY.
BRUCE... ?
EEEEEEEEEEEE
BETTY NO MAKE NOISE.


I DON'T THINK THE LADY WANTS YOUR COMPANY.
PHTOOM
DKUSH
GRRR
HULK HURT.
HULK MAD!
MADDER HULK GETS--
-- STRONGER HULK GETS!


I'M TAKING THE GIRL TO SAFETY.
I DON'T WANT TO HURT YOU.
BUT I WILL IF I HAVE TO...
To this day, Leonard, I'll never understand it.
People say the stupidest things when they know they can't possibly win...
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MARVEL
MK
4 of Six
MARVEL PSR
HULK
GRAY
by
JEPH LOEB
&
TIM SALE
T. SALE 2003.

HULK GRAY

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lettering & design

NANCI DAKESIAN *managing editor*

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Book 4

"D IS FOR DOG"



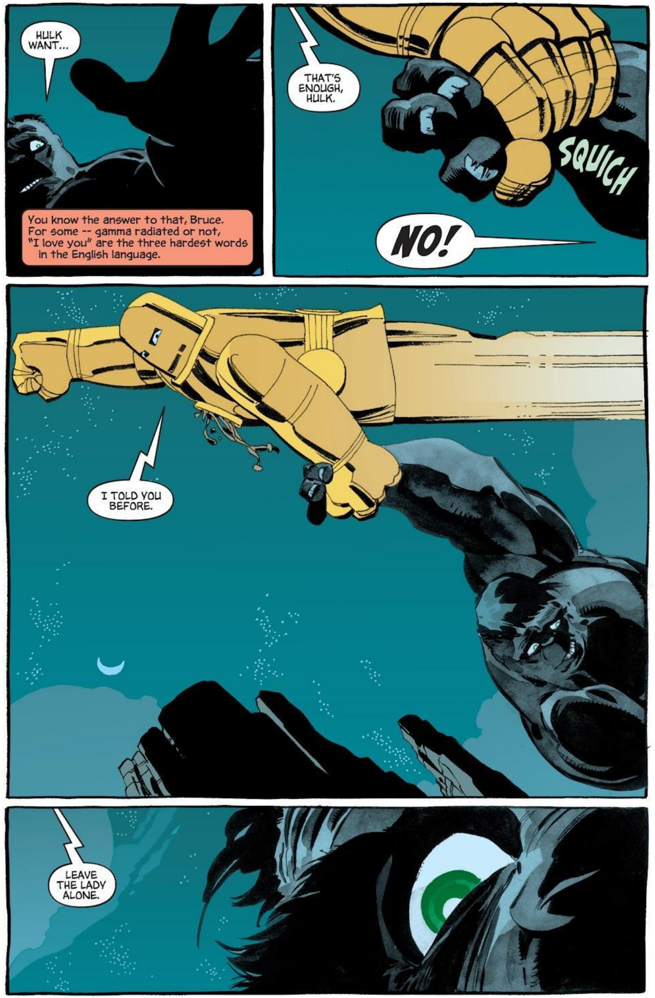

NOT VERY BRIGHT ARE YOU, HULK?
THIS *ISN'T* A ROBOT YOU'RE FACING.
I LIKE TO THINK OF MYSELF AS...
THE INVINCIBLE IRON MAN!
RRRARRRGH


BDOOM!
Bruce.
Leonard.
What is this story you're telling me?
I don't understand the question.
THUMP
Bruce, I've read about every known battle The Hulk... you... have had.
The Hulk never met Iron Man while he was gray.
ROBOT.


In fact, when the Avengers were founded, that's when they first encountered each other.
It's in The Avengers' archives.
WHO...
WHAT ARE YOU SUPPOSED TO BE?
I'M NOT SUPPOSED TO BE ANYTHING, MISS.
I'M A... FRIEND.
YOUR FATHER SENT ME TO RESCUE YOU FROM THAT MONSTROSITY.
FIGURES. MY FATHER'S IDEA OF A KNIGHT IN SHINING ARMOR WOULD BE A MAN DRESSED UP LIKE A TANK.
Iron Man himself recorded most of those early adventures.
UH-OH.
WHAT IS IT, MISS...?
ROBOT!
They're in the Stark Foundation library --
Stark Industries was the nation's leading munitions manufacturer at the time.
You do the math.
You're claiming there was a cover-up by both the Government and Tony Stark? Bruce, that's --
Leonard...


...shut up and listen to the story.
STAY AWAY FROM BETTY!
BAM

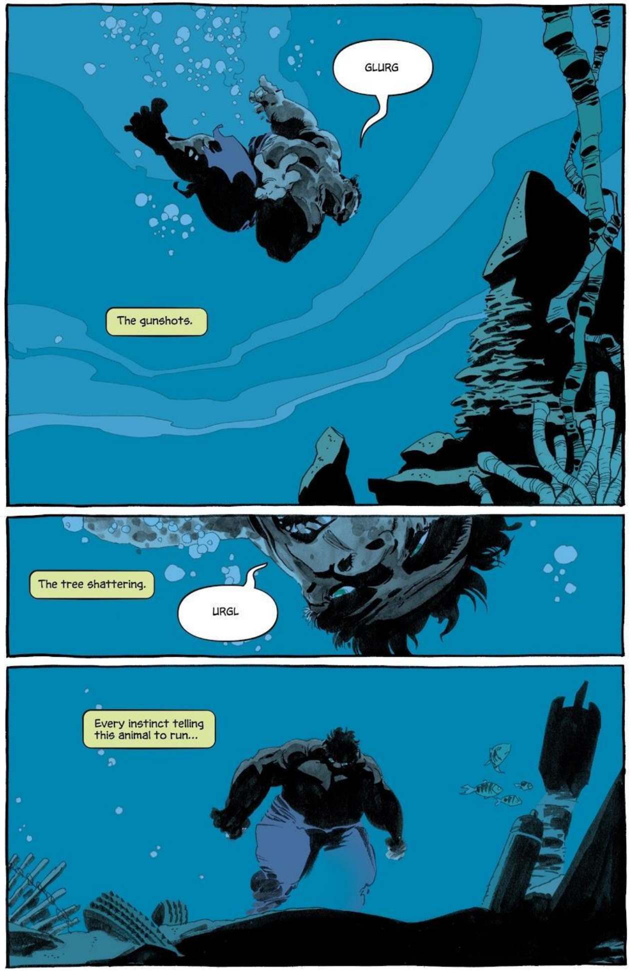

TELL ROSS.
HULK ONLY WANTS TO BE LEFT ALONE.
POOT
BETTY SAFE NOW.
SAFE.
SAFE?!
IS THERE A BRAIN IN THAT HEAD OF YOURS?!
WHAT IS IT YOU WANT FROM ME?
I DON'T KNOW YOU.
WHAT DO YOU WANT?!
What could I tell her?
Given your... The Hulk's limited vocabulary at the time, Bruce, you can't expect --
Dammit, Leonard, how hard is it to tell someone you love them?!

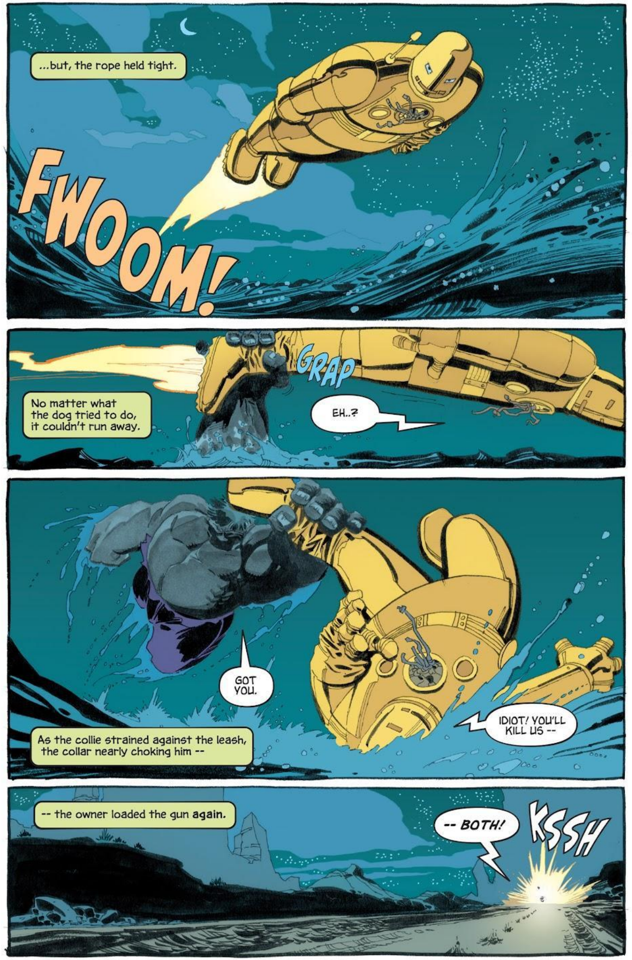

HULK WANT...
You know the answer to that, Bruce. For some -- gamma radiated or not, "I love you" are the three hardest words in the English language.
THAT'S ENOUGH, HULK.
SQUICH
NO!
I TOLD YOU BEFORE.
LEAVE THE LADY ALONE.


I read something once. It was about a dog. A collie, I think.
YOU'RE STRONG, I'LL GIVE YOU THAT.
BUT, I'M WILLING TO BET YOU STILL HAVE TO *BREATHE.*
It's one of those horrible things you hear about as a child, but it stays with you your entire life and you're not entirely sure why.
PRETTY SOON YOU'LL BLACK OUT AND WE WON'T HAVE TO WORRY ABOUT *THAT.*
HULK... COLD.
The dog's owner tied the collie to a tree in his yard.


Then, the owner took a gun.
WHAT THE --?!
WRAM!
LET GO, ROBOT!
THOOM
LET.
Aimed it in the direction of the dog.
GO...?
And pulled the trigger.

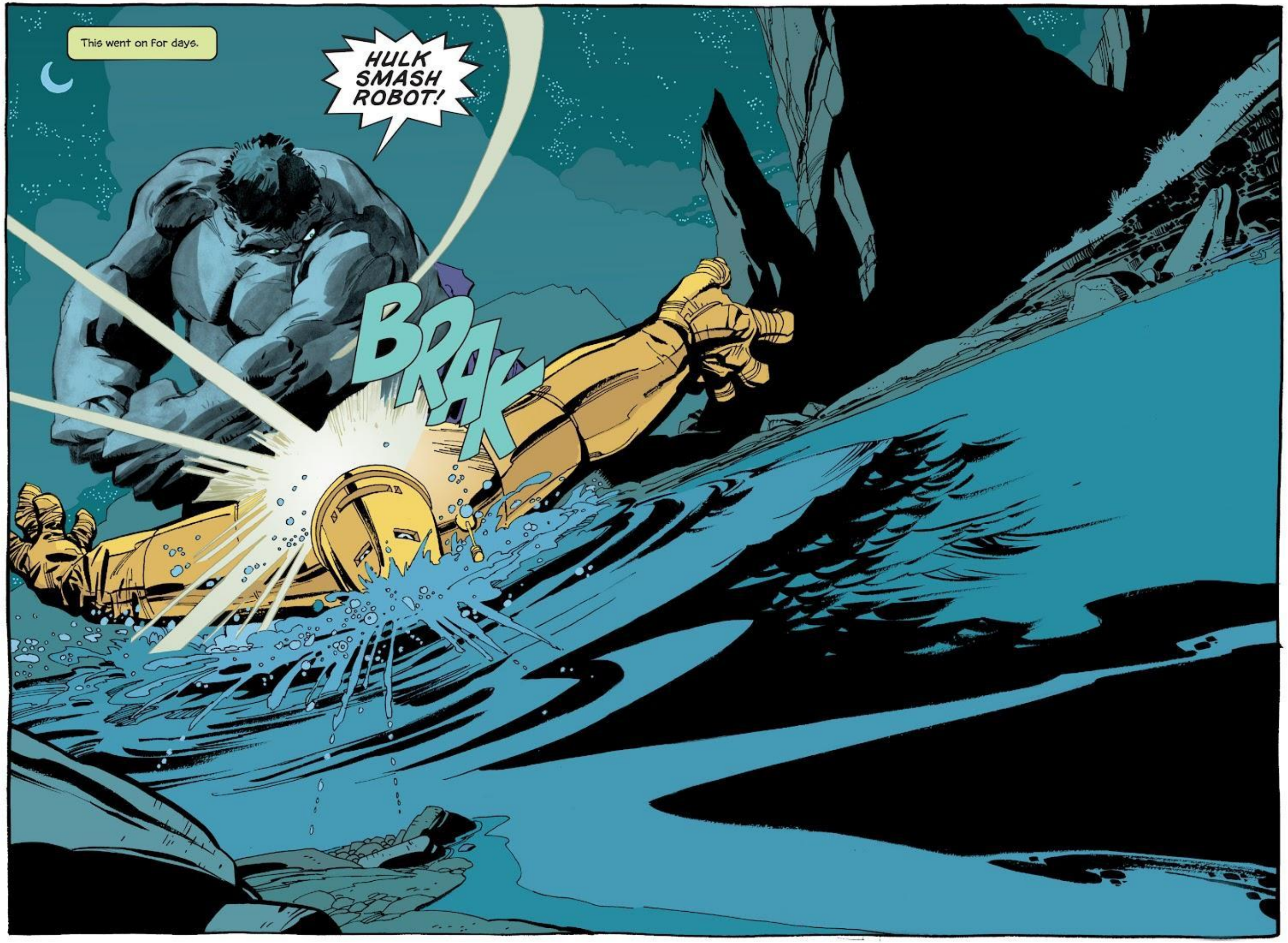

The bullet **drilled** into the tree trunk.
Bark splintering everywhere.
And the dog... this collie...
The collie was terrified...
...traumatized...
SPLOOSH


GLURG
The gunshots.
The tree shattering.
URGL
Every instinct telling this animal to run...


...but, the rope held tight.
FWOOM!
GRAP
No matter what the dog tried to do, it couldn't run away.
EH..?
GOT YOU.
IDIOT! YOU'LL KILL US --
As the collie strained against the leash, the collar nearly choking him --
-- the owner loaded the gun **again.**
-- BOTH!
KSSH


He fired the gun again.
CAN'T BELIEVE THE HULK SURVIVED A FALL FROM THAT HEIGHT.
NEVER COME UP AGAINST *ANYTHING* THAT STRONG AND THIS ARMOR WAS NEVER *INTENDED* --
ROBOT HURT HULK.
Not at the dog -- but the tree -- spraying bark across the lawn.
HULK HURT ROBOT.
WAM!
He just kept firing, terrorizing the dog.


Blam.
BLAM.
BLAM!


This went on for days.
HULK SMASH ROBOT!
BRAK

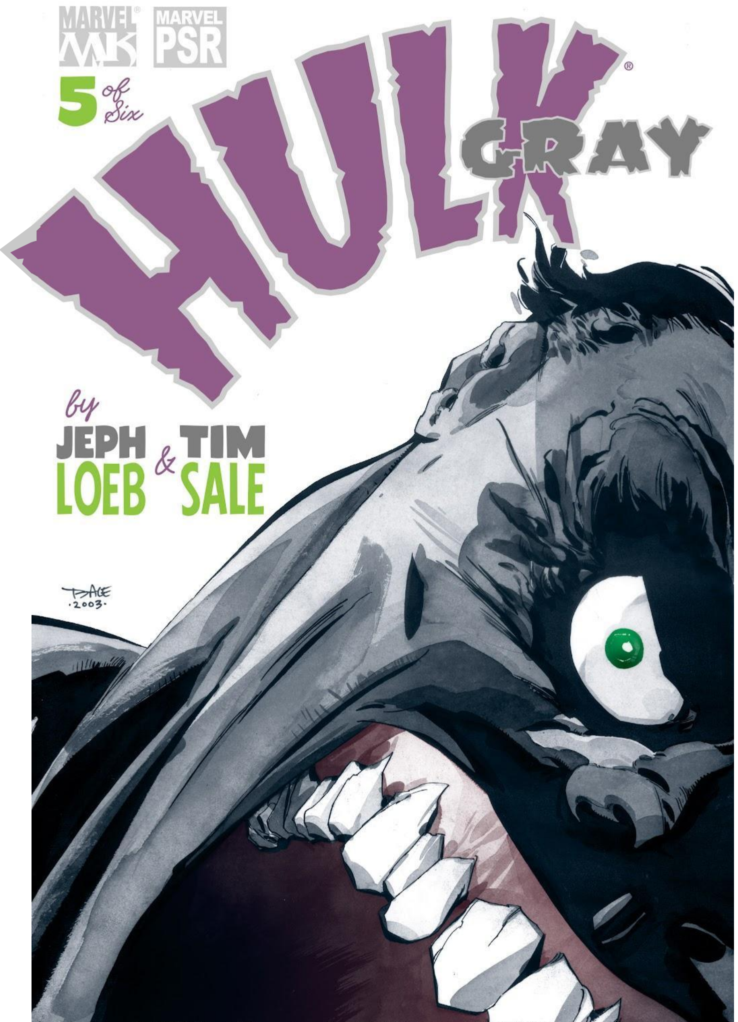

Finally, the owner ran out of bullets.
PLEASE --
He got drunk and for whatever reason decided it was time to **untie** the dog.
-- HE'S ***NOT*** A ROBOT. THERE'S A ***MAN*** INSIDE THAT ARMOR AND IF YOU KEEP HITTING HIM --
-- YOU'LL KILL *NNGGGN*
The dog waited until he was freed of the rope --
BOINK!
THK
-- and **bit** the owner's gun hand, tearing through the flesh and bone.


The dog bit the man's hand off.
BETTY?


BETTY.
BETTY.


BETTY NEED HELP.
HULK FIX BETTY.


Bruce... in your story... between you and General Ross...
...which one of you is the dog and which one is the owner?
Honestly, Leonard...?
SIR...
...WE FOUND HIM.
GENERAL! THERE'S A MAN INSIDE THIS ARMOR.
HE'S BLEEDING, SIR, AND I THINK HE'LL NEED MEDICAL ATTENTION --
LEAVE HIM BE.
STARK GOT THAT IRON CAN INTO THIS MESS. STARK CAN PRY THAT MAN OUT OF IT.
THE HULK IS ON THE RUN WITH THE TRAIL GROWING COLDER BY THE SECOND.
IT'S OBVIOUS NOW THAT MONSTER HAS SOME KIND OF INTEREST IN BETTY...
There are days when I can't tell the difference...
AND WE'RE GOING TO FIND OUT WHY...
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MARVEL MK
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HULK
GRAY
by
JEPH LOEB & TIM SALE
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HULK GRAY

Book 5

"E IS FOR ELEPHANT"

JEPH LOEB & TIM SALE *storytellers*

MATT HOLLINGSWORTH *colors*

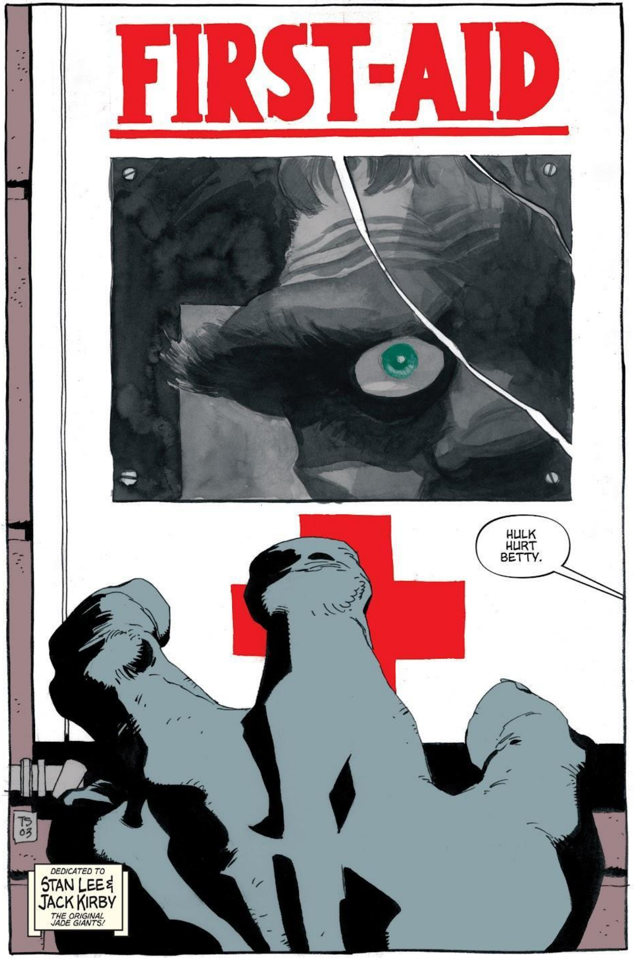
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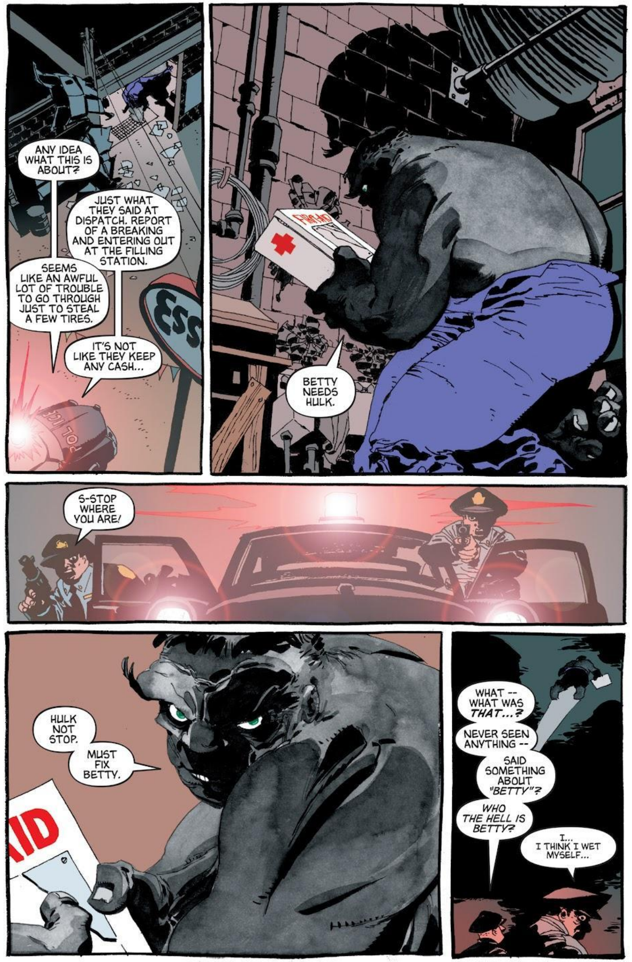
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Bruce...?
Hmm?
You okay...?
Why do you ask, Leonard?
Because you've been standing in my office looking out the window at the rain and haven't said a word in fifteen minutes.
And up until now... up until the part of the story where The Hulk hurt Betty... you've been quite chatty.
You mean, when I hurt Betty...
...this first time...
HULK *FIX* BETTY.
ROBS
FIRST-AID
ATLAS
TIRES
BATTERIES · ACCESSORIES


ANY IDEA WHAT THIS IS ABOUT?
JUST WHAT THEY SAID AT DISPATCH. REPORT OF A BREAKING AND ENTERING OUT AT THE FILLING STATION.
SEEMS LIKE AN AWFUL LOT OF TROUBLE TO GO THROUGH JUST TO STEAL A FEW TIRES.
IT'S NOT LIKE THEY KEEP ANY CASH...
BETTY NEEDS HULK.
S-STOP WHERE YOU ARE!
HULK NOT STOP.
MUST FIX BETTY.
WHAT -- WHAT WAS *THAT...?*
NEVER SEEN ANYTHING --
SAID SOMETHING ABOUT *"BETTY"?*
WHO THE HELL IS BETTY?
I... I THINK I WET MYSELF...


It's fairly... incredible, to pick a word, The Hulk didn't engage the police in any way.
A far cry from the mindless beast that Ross always portrayed you as.
There's a shocker. Ross exaggerating the truth.
BETTY.
I don't know... on some level, The Hulk -- I knew what **we'd** done. It's the **elephant** in the room, Leonard. We all know it's there but nobody wants to talk about it.
It was an **accident**, Bruce.
Don't do that, Leonard.
Don't do **what**, Bruce?
Don't excuse The Hulk's behavior as "an accident."


Don't excuse
The Hulk for **anything.**
HULK
SORRY.


UGGGNN
Bruce, you have to look at this for what it was. The Hulk was trying to give medical attention to the woman he injured.
WHERE...
That's fairly high cognitive thinking. To say nothing of acceptance of responsibility for one's actions.
Yes. He could have killed her instead.


THIS... THIS ISN'T HAPPENING.
I'M CAUGHT UP IN SOME KIND OF *NIGHTMARE.*
A TERRIBLE, HORRIBLE NIGHTMARE.
TAKE. FOR BETTY'S HEAD.
YOU CAN'T... YOU *CAN'T* BE REAL.
I KNOW... I'VE SEEN YOU... BUT, PLEASE -- JUST LET ME WAKE UP AND...
IODIN
ASPIRIN
HULK IS REAL.
HULK IS HULK.
It's interesting. How when Betty awoke, she immediately went into denial about what was happening around her.
It was an **insane** situation, Leonard. At least, **my** definition of insane.

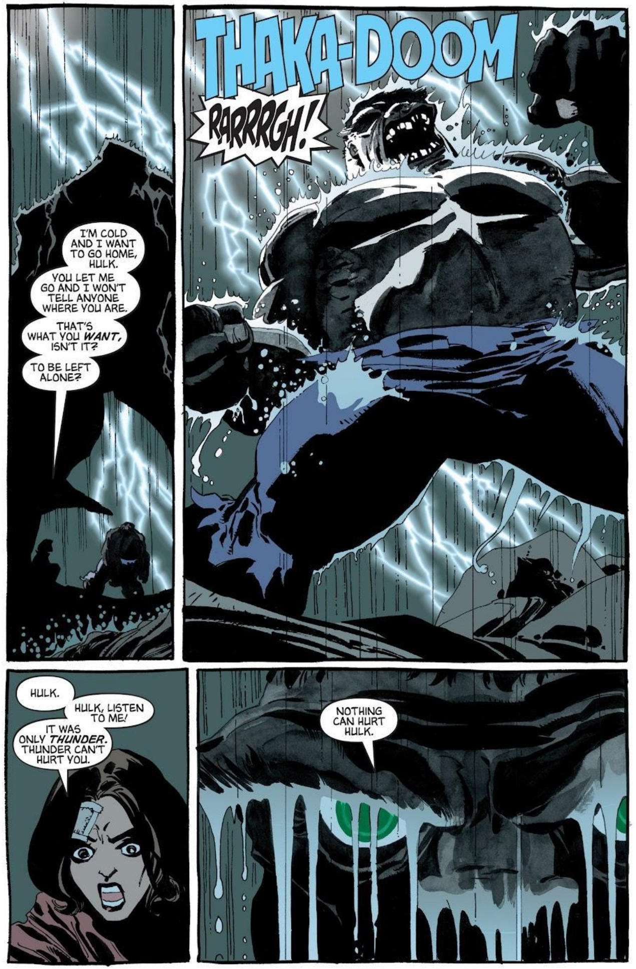

"Hulk is Hulk." Hmm... I don't think I've ever heard it put that way...


MOST OF THIS MEDICATION IS *USELESS.*
WHY'D YOU BRING SO *MUCH* OF IT?
BETTY HURT.
HULK NOT WANT BETTY HURT.
YES. *"BETTY HURT."*
I *GOT* HURT BECAUSE YOU ***THREW*** ME INTO A ROCK AND SPLIT OPEN MY HEAD.
HULK NOT MEAN TO HURT BETTY.
WELL, YOU DID.
I DON'T *CARE* WHAT YOU *MEANT* TO DO. YOU'RE A GIANT LUMBERING ***BEAST*** WHO SMASHES AND DESTROYS ***EVERYTHING*** IT TOUCHES.
WELL, YOU'RE ***NOT*** GOING TO DESTROY ME. YOU GOT THAT?
YOU ARE NOT GOING TO DESTROY ME!


NO YELL AT HULK.
MAKE HULK MAD.
FINE.
I WON'T YELL.
HAPPY?
THIS WOULD BE A HELL OF LOT EASIER IF I HAD A MIRROR.
YOU DIDN'T HAPPEN TO BRING ONE OF ***THOSE,*** DID YOU?
FIRST-AID
SO... YOU'RE NOT A *COMPLETE* IDIOT.



Bruce... Is this what happened or is it how you remembered what happened?
I can't answer that.
Can't. Or won't?
Does it matter?
I'M COLD.
It's just... in the stories I've heard, given the times, given who she was...
Don't get me wrong. I admire Betty's strength, her courage. Not many people get angry with the Hulk and get away with it.
Betty was a remarkable woman.
And yes... The memory of how she was at the end of her life rings truer to me than maybe how she really was back then...
Sue me.



I'M COLD AND I WANT TO GO HOME, HULK.
YOU LET ME GO AND I WON'T TELL ANYONE WHERE YOU ARE.
THAT'S WHAT YOU WANT, ISN'T IT?
TO BE LEFT ALONE?
THAKA-DOOM
RARRRGH!
HULK.
HULK, LISTEN TO ME!
IT WAS ONLY THUNDER. THUNDER CAN'T HURT YOU.
NOTHING CAN HURT HULK.

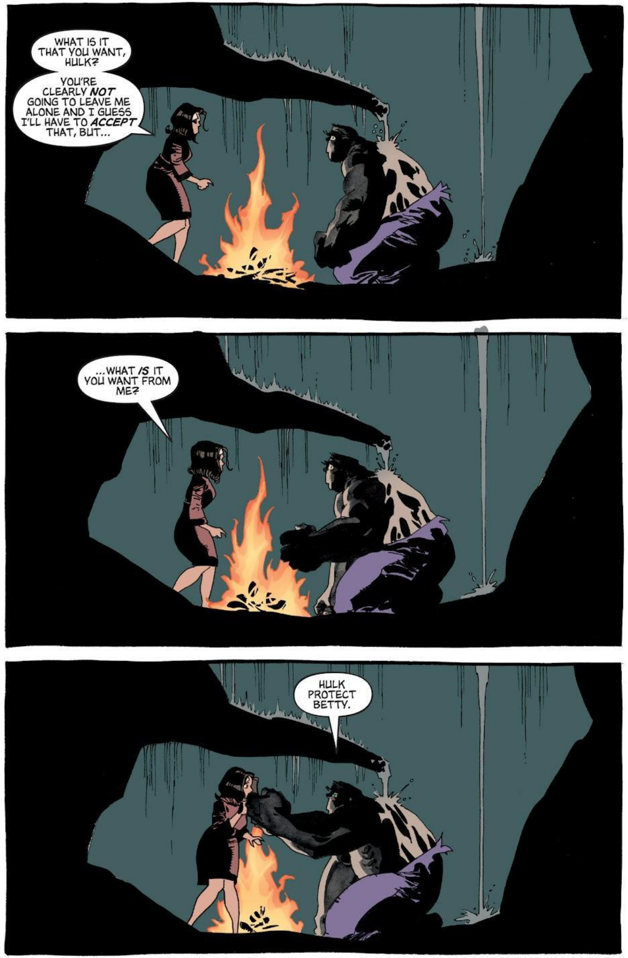

THAT'S RIGHT. NOTHING CAN HURT YOU. SO, LET ME *LEAVE* AND -- ***WHERE ARE YOU GOING?***
BETTY *STAY.*
NO... THAT WASN'T OUR...
...DEAL ...
...WHERE DID YOU GO...?
WHAT NOW...?


LIGHTNING MAKE FIRE.
BETTY COLD.
BETTY WARM NOW.
BETTY STAY.
PLEASE... LET ME GO...
STAY.


PLEASE...
PLEASE LET ME GO.
She tried to make a deal with the Hulk.
Yes.
That never goes well.
No, as we both know, Leonard, it never does...

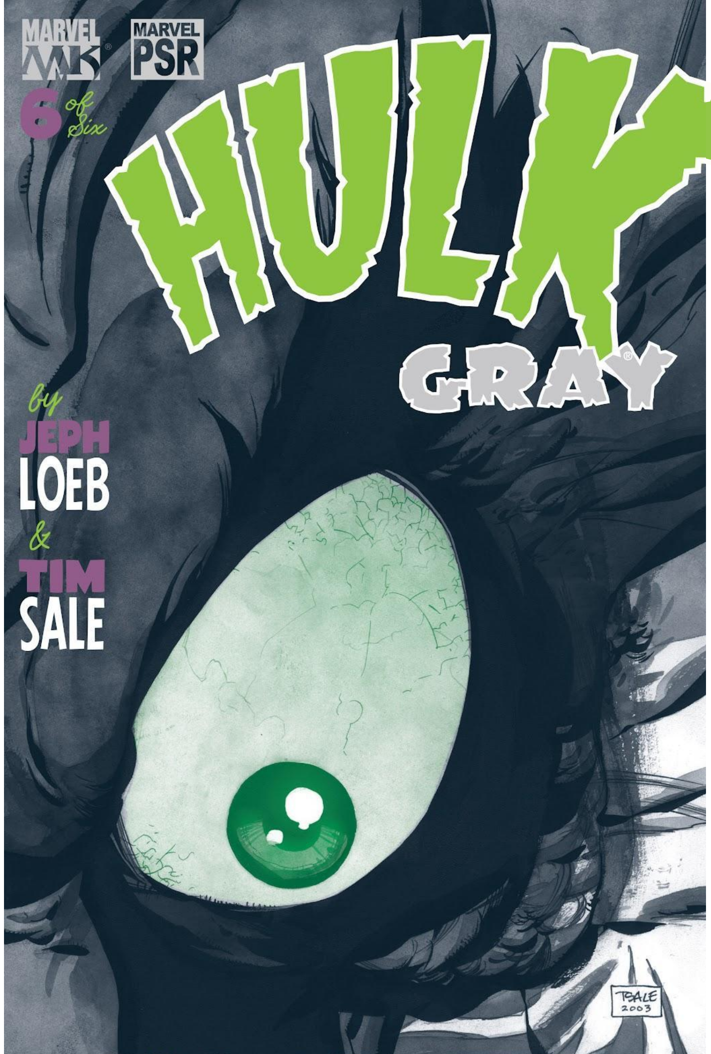

I'M GOING TO DIE OUT HERE.
NO.
NO ONE HURTS BETTY.
HULK SMASH THEM.
YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND.
MAYBE YOU *CAN'T* UNDERSTAND.
I'M NOT HAPPY HERE.
I'M SCARED AND ALONE, AND...
MAYBE I'D BE BETTER OFF DEAD...


Do you think she meant that?
Do I think she meant **what?**
That she'd be better off dead. That's a fairly **depressing** thing to say.
I imagine it was a very depressing moment...
WHY BETTY SAD?
YOU REALLY *DON'T* UNDERSTAND, DO YOU?


WHAT IS IT THAT YOU WANT, HULK?
YOU'RE CLEARLY **NOT** GOING TO LEAVE ME ALONE AND I GUESS I'LL HAVE TO **ACCEPT** THAT, BUT...
...WHAT ***IS*** IT YOU WANT FROM ME?
HULK PROTECT BETTY.


PROTECT ME?
PROTECT ME FROM ***WHAT,*** HULK?
THE ONLY THING I'M AFRAID OF...
THE ONLY THING THAT IS HURTING ME...
...IS ***YOU.***
NO... BETTY NEED HULK...


Interesting... You know what you've told me, don't you, Bruce?
I'm not done --
Denial. Anger. Bargaining. Depression. Acceptance. The five stages of grief. If you believe in any of that.
Grief?
There's a school of thought they can go in any random order -- at least up until acceptance.
HULK! IT ENDS NOW!
ROSS.
DADDY...?
What... what would Betty be grieving about... I mean, at that time, Leonard?
What is grief? Loss. Loss of a loved one.
Can you think of anyone she'd lost, or thought she'd lost, Bruce?
Bruce...?
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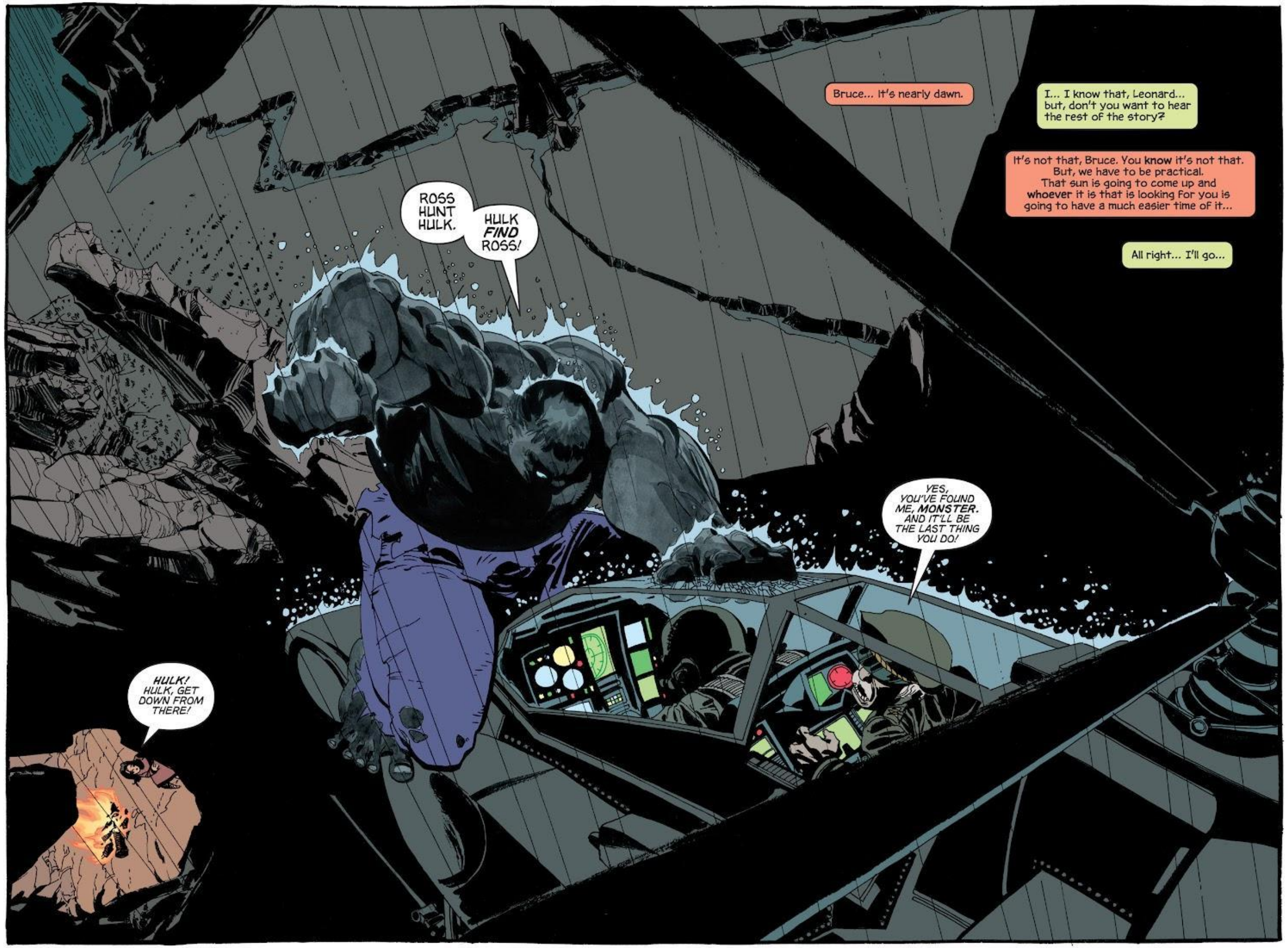
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Book 6

"F IS FOR FATHER"




Bruce... it's nearly dawn.
I... I know that, Leonard... but, don't you want to hear the rest of the story?
It's not that, Bruce. You know it's not that. But, we have to be practical. That sun is going to come up and whoever it is that is looking for you is going to have a much easier time of it...
All right... I'll go...
ROSS HUNT HULK.
HULK FIND ROSS!
YES, YOU'VE FOUND ME, MONSTER. AND IT'LL BE THE LAST THING YOU DO!
HULK! HULK, GET DOWN FROM THERE!


HULK BRING ROSS DOWN.
Bruce... Listen, we still have a few minutes.
And I have a feeling that what you are building up to is crucial as to why you came to see me tonight.
I don't know, Leonard...
BE CAREFUL...
...the only thing I'm sure of is... I wanted to kill Ross that night...


And that either would've been the smartest thing the Hulk ever did...
THAROOM
OUT.
NGGGN
HULK STOP ROSS.
URK.


Or something **none** of us could have lived with from that point on...
HULK SMASH ROSS!


But... you **didn't** take his life, Bruce. You have to remember that.
DO YOU WANT ME TO BEG? IS *THAT* WHAT YOU WANT, MONSTER?!
HULK *WANTS* TO BE LEFT ALONE.
Even this early on... **especially** this early on... when you really didn't have control of all of your... **The Hulk's** faculties --
GO TO HELL!
-- you did not take his life. No matter how much he may have deserved it.


You're kidding me, right, Leonard?
Am I...?
GO AHEAD, HULK.
DO IT!
IT WOULD BE WORTH IT TO DIE OUT HERE WITH MY BLOOD ON YOUR HANDS.
THEN, EVERYONE WOULD SEE YOU FOR THE MONSTER THAT YOU ARE --
-- AND NO MATTER WHERE YOU GO, WHERE YOU HIDE, YOU'LL NEVER BE LEFT ALONE!
"No matter how much he may have deserved it." What is that, Leonard? Are you baiting me like he baited me?
HULK IS NOT A MONSTER!
Nobody deserves to die, Leonard.
Nobody...


GENERAL ROSS...!
WE'VE GOT HIM IN OUR SIGHTS, SIR.
THEN, WHAT ARE YOU WAITING FOR?! SHOOT HIM!


IT'S... NOT THAT SIMPLE, SIR.
YOU -- YOU'RE IN HARM'S WAY, GENERAL.
I DON'T CARE IF I AM IN HARM'S WAY --
-- SHOOT HIM!
NO! HOLD YOUR FIRE!
SHOOT HIM!
THAT'S A DIRECT ORDER!
SHOOT.
HIM.
Good Lord, Bruce... How you managed to keep any semblance of sanity...


Honestly, Leonard, I don't think the "Good Lord" had anything to do with it.
HOLD YOUR FIRE, PLEASE!
BETTY, DAMMIT, WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU DOING?
GET OUT OF HERE!
BETTY..?
HULK... HULK, LISTEN TO ME. PUT HIM DOWN.
PUT MY FATHER --
HOW DARE YOU INTERFERE, DAUGHTER?! THIS IS A MILITARY OPERATION!


PUT HIM DOWN, HULK.
I DON'T UNDERSTAND...
...I GAVE YOU MEN A DIRECT ORDER...
...AND YOU'RE LISTENING TO SOME PRATTLING CHILD?!
To hear you tell it, Bruce, Ross was borderline psychotic.
BECAUSE THEY KNOW.
THEY KNOW IF THEY FIRE ON THE HULK, THE BULLETS ARE ONLY GOING TO BOUNCE OFF OF HIM AND HIT YOU.
WHAT OF IT?
WHY IS MY LIFE ANY MORE IMPORTANT THAN THE LIVES THIS MONSTER HAS DESTROYED?
HE PROBABLY KILLED BANNER, YOU KNOW.
YOU DO KNOW THAT, DON'T YOU, BETTY?
Calling him "borderline," Leonard, is an insult to all the other psychotics out there.


HULK HATE BANNER.
Just what are you implying, Leonard?
THAKA-DOOOM
BUT HULK HATE ROSS MORE.
DO YOU SEE NOW, BETTY?
DO YOU SEE THIS CREATURE FOR WHAT IT IS?
OR DO YOU STILL WANT TO PLAY THE INSOLENT CHILD?
JUST LIKE YOUR MOTHER. CONFUSING DEFIANCE WITH HEROISM.
SHUT UP, ROSS.
PLEASE...
You've been there. You've seen how Ross can be.



You think I'm making this up?
That I'm exaggerating what happened to play Ross as the enemy?
HULK...?
HE'S MY *FATHER*.
WITH ALL HIS FLAWS, I LOVE HIM.
I WILL *ALWAYS* LOVE HIM.
AND *THAT'S* WHY YOU CAN'T KILL HIM.



HULK NOT UNDERSTAND.
HULK NOT MONSTER.
HULK NOT HURT BETTY.
ROSS *ALWAYS* HURT BETTY.


BAH.
Honestly, Bruce, by the time I came into your life -- all of your lives -- some of the **thunder** had gone out of "Thunderbolt" Ross.
I'm **not** exaggerating, Leonard. I don't have to when it comes to Ross!
He is what he is...
"Hulk is Hulk."
What was that?
Nothing, Bruce. Go on...


Eventually, I had to return to The Base. **Rick** had found me out in the desert and cobbled together some clothes.
Why **did** you go there, Bruce?
Where was I going to go, Leonard? I didn't know **then** that I'd always be running...
ARMY BASE
...and I had to... For Betty...
YOU SURE YOU WANT TO DO THIS, DOC?
I'VE ***GOT*** TO, RICK. I CAN'T LET THE WORLD THINK THAT THE HULK ***KILLED*** ME.
I DON'T KNOW... EITHER WAY SEEMS LIKE IT'S YOUR FUNERAL.
BANNER!
*WHERE THE **DEVIL** HAVE YOU BEEN HIDING?*
BRUCE...
THANK GOD...


I MUST'VE GOTTEN LOST OUT IN THE DESERT. RICK FOUND ME AND --
RICK? THIS SNOT-NOSED KID? DO YOU HAVE ANY IDEA THE NUMBER OF MAN HOURS --
I'M SORRY --
SORRY...?
YOU WEAK --
-- COWARDLY --
-- MILKSOP --
STOP IT! STOP IT!
DADDY, YOU'RE AS HORRIBLE AS THAT HULK!
Ouch.
...Bruce ...?
Bruce... we should, um, really stop now...


SO... THAT WAS IT, THEN...
THE "WHY" OF IT ALL.
WHY BETTY STAYED WITH ME ALL THOSE YEARS...
...EVEN AFTER SHE FOUND OUT -- AFTER THE ENTIRE WORLD FOUND OUT THAT BRUCE BANNER IS THE HULK.
BRUCE, DON'T GO THERE.
SHE LOVED ME BECAUSE SHE SAW THE MONSTER AS SOMETHING FAMILIAR...
...AS SOMETHING... SOMEONE... SHE COULD LOVE.
NOT EVERYTHING IS... AS BLACK AND WHITE AS YOU'RE SAYING --
DAMMIT, LEONARD, I'VE KNOWN THIS ALL ALONG. I WAS JUST TOO MUCH OF A COWARD TO ADMIT IT.
ME. ROSS. WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE?!
BRUCE. CALM DOWN.

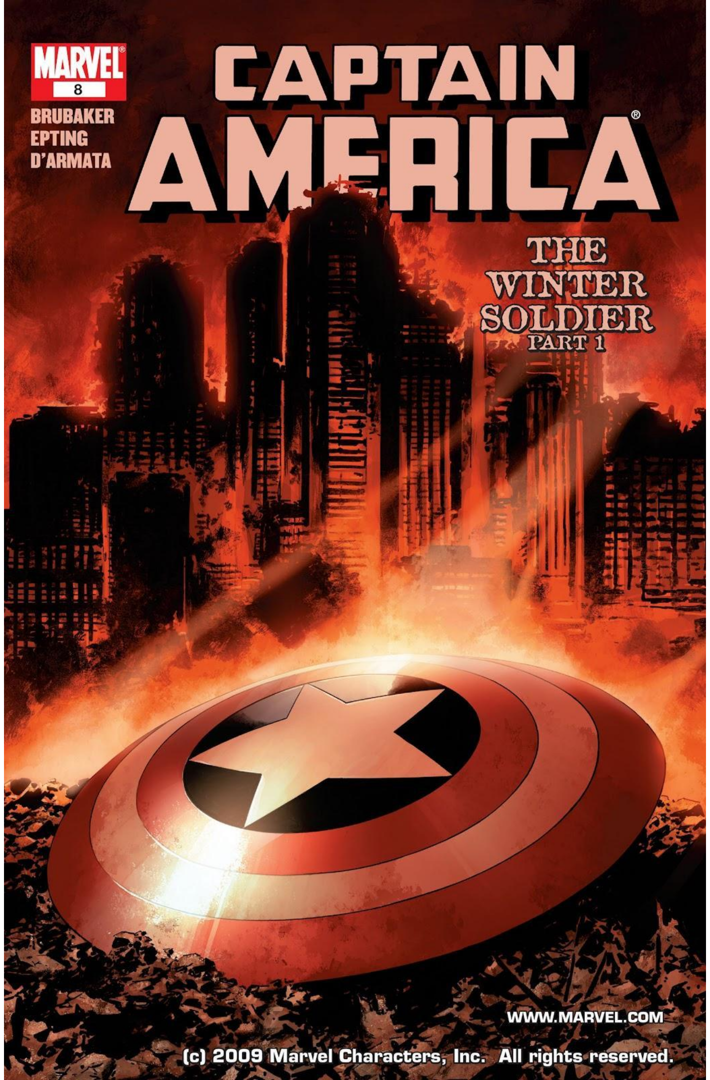

CALM DOWN?
CALM DOWN?!
THE WHOLE WORLD WANTS ME TO CALM DOWN!
NO MORE TALK.


HULK SMASH!
Bruce...
...I'm so sorry...



She's gone now...
THOOM
There are so many **other** stories of what happened afterwards...
But... they will now always be colored by the knowledge that she loved me for all the **wrong** reasons...
BETTY...
LOEB SALE 2004

THE END


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THE WINTER SOLDIER
PART 1
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April 1945, the English Channel near Dover
Experimental Soviet spy-submarine heading toward German waters.
<Captain, we're picking up a German transmission.>
<Can you decode it?>
<That's just it, sir. It's an open transmission, not coded.>
<What are they saying?>
<They...no, that cannot be right...>
<Out with it! Don't keep Comrade Karpov waiting!>
<They're broadcasting the news on all frequencies, claiming they just blew up Captain America over the Channel Islands...>
<How far are we from these Channel Islands?>


S.H.I.E.L.D. Helicarrier-- Headquarters of the U.N. Peacekeeping Taskforce
Present day.
I'm sorry, what am I supposed to be looking at here, Fury?
I think you can figure it out, Rogers. Just look.
I already told him, Nick. He's not going to listen...


SO, YOU EXPECT ME TO BELIEVE, WHAT...THAT THESE ARE PICTURES OF BUCKY?
THEN SHARON'S RIGHT...I'M NOT GOING TO LISTEN TO THAT.
STEVE. I SAW HIM, CLOSE-UP. YOU--
IT'S A TRICK.
ISN'T THAT WHAT YOU SAID WHEN THE RED SKULL WAS KILLED?
NO...THIS IS DIFFERENT... THIS--
YOU EXPECT ME TO BELIEVE THAT BUCKY IS STILL ALIVE...THAT HE'S WORKING FOR THE ENEMY...
...THAT HE'S RESPONSIBLE FOR WHAT HAPPENED IN PHILADELPHIA LAST NIGHT?


Last night
AAAAIIIIEEEEE!
I'VE GOT YOU!
JUST HANG ON TIGHT!
EEEEEE!
KKLSSHHH



KAWHUMP
LISTEN TO ME. YOU'RE ALL RIGHT. BUT YOU NEED TO MOVE QUICKLY, OKAY? JUST FOLLOW THE OTHERS AND KEEP YOUR LITTLE BROTHER WITH YOU. HOLD HIS HAND. IT'S NOT FAR TO SAFETY.
CAN YOU DO THAT?
Y-Y-YES, SIR...THANK YOU.
TWO KIDS ON THEIR WAY OUT, SHARON. MAKE SURE THEY FIND THEIR PARENTS.
I'LL TRY. HAVING A HARD ENOUGH TIME JUST MAKING SURE ALL THESE PEOPLE STAY IN ONE PLACE.
JUST DO WHAT YOU CAN.
LISTEN, S.H.I.E.L.D. RESPONSE UNITS SHOULD BE ON-SITE IN A FEW MINUTES TO HELP, BUT...
WHAT IS IT?
IT'S JUST, I THOUGHT I CAUGHT A GLANCE OF SOMETHING THROUGH THE SMOKE...



"...THAT I THINK YOU'D BETTER CHECK OUT."
JUST...JUST HANG ON, HONEY. YOU'RE GONNA BE ALL RIGHT...THE RESCUE TEAMS ARE HERE.
HEY, OVER HERE! MY WIFE NEEDS HELP!
NO WITNESSES.
BUDDA BUDDA BUDDA BUDDA BUDDA BUDDA BUDDA BUDDA
WE'RE CLOSE NOW.
WELL, WE'D BETTER BE. WE'VE GOT ABOUT TWO MINUTES BEFORE THIS PLACE IS SWARMING WITH S.H.I.E.L.D. AND EVERYBODY ELSE.
NO. OF COURSE NOT.
SO WE SHOULD JUST LEAVE WHATEVER'S LEFT OF OUR TECHNOLOGY FOR THEM TO FIND?
BESIDES, THESE READINGS I'M GETTING ARE WORTH THE RISK...JUST LOOK AT THIS PLACE.
WE MAY NOT HAVE SET THE BOMB, BUT THIS DESTRUCTION IS BY OUR DESIGN...


AND YOU'RE PROUD OF THAT?
KNCK
BUDDA
BUDDA
BUDDA
OH GOD...THIS ISN'T...


YOU KEEP AWAY FROM ME! I'M JUST A SCIENTIST!
I KNOW... THAT'S THE PROBLEM WITH YOU PEOPLE.
JUST STUDYING ALL THIS DEATH AND MISERY LIKE IT'S SOME TWISTED LITTLE ANT-FARM...
THIS IS BLOOD YOU'RE WALKING IN!
PEOPLE'S BLOOD!
KRAK
S--SEND IN THE MODOC SQUAD!
NOW! NOW!
MODOC SQUAD?
YOU'VE GOT TWO SECONDS TO TELL ME WHAT THE HELL THAT IS.
M-M-MILITARY OPERATIVES DESIGNED ONLY FOR COMBAT...
YOU GUYS NEVER QUIT, DO YOU?


ALL RIGHT...LET'S GO.


THESE ARE SURVEILLANCE PHOTOS TAKEN NEAR AIRPORTS, TRAIN STATIONS, AND BORDER CROSSINGS...AND THEY'RE *NOT* RECENT PICTURES.
THIS ONE IS FROM WEST BERLIN, IN 1955, SAME NIGHT GENERAL KELLER HAD HIS BRAINS BLOWN OUT.
THIS IS LONDON, 1960...THE MORNING AFTER THE TOP MAN AT MI6 WAS FOUND DROWNED IN HIS BATHTUB.
UNDERGROUND STATION
THIS IS SWITZERLAND, 1976. SAME DAY THAT THE VICE-CHANCELLOR OF WAKANDA FELL OFF A MOUNTAIN.
HE WAS THERE FOR A GLOBAL ECONOMIC SUMMIT, AS WELL AS THE SKIING.
THE POINT IS, THESE ARE PEOPLE ARRIVING OR LEAVING AROUND THE TIMES OF ASSASSINATIONS THAT HAD *MAJOR IMPACT* ON THE COLD WAR.
AND IN ALL OF THEM, WE'VE BEEN ABLE TO ISOLATE *THIS MAN*... AND THE FINEST FACIAL RECOGNITION SOFTWARE IN THE WORLD TELLS ME THAT IT'S THE SAME GUY.
YET *NONE* OF YOUR PREDECESSORS *EVER* NOTICED THIS?
WE'RE TALKING THOUSANDS OF CROWD PHOTOS TO LOOK THROUGH, AND THE GUY IS *GOOD*. HE'S A PROFILE HERE OR THERE, MOSTLY.
AND THIS WAS THE OLD DAYS. THE *TECH* WASN'T THERE YET, NOT FOR STUFF *LIKE THIS*.



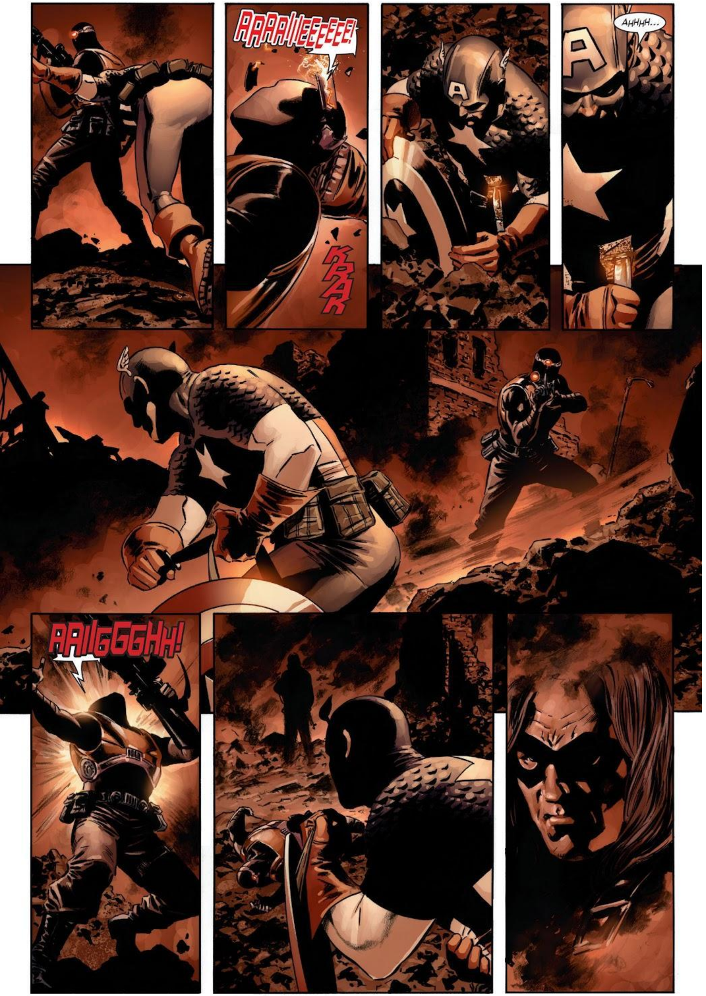
THERE'S SOMETHING *ELSE*, TOO, THAT OUR 21ST CENTURY SOFTWARE IS ABLE TO TELL US...
BETWEEN 1955 AND 1976 IT'S ESTIMATED OUR HITTER ONLY AGED APPROXIMATELY *FIVE YEARS.*
HOW IS THAT POSSIBLE?
WELL, YOU AND I KNOW A FEW WAYS BETWEEN US...BUT THIS ONE...
BEST GUESS IS BECAUSE HE'S A COLD WAR MYTH THAT'S TURNIN' OUT TO BE TRUE.
WHAT MYTH?
THEY CALLED HIM THE *WINTER SOLDIER.*
SUPPOSED TO BE THE KGB'S SECRET WEAPON. A GUY WHO COULD PASS FOR AMERICAN AND SLIP BEHIND ENEMY LINES OR CROSS BORDERS WITHOUT RAISIN' AN EYEBROW.
DEADLY WITH A KNIFE OR A RIFLE...EVEN *DEADLIER* HAND-TO-HAND.
AND SINCE HE WAS A GHOST, HALF THE TIME THEY WEREN'T EVEN SURE IF IT WAS AN ACCIDENT OR A MURDER.

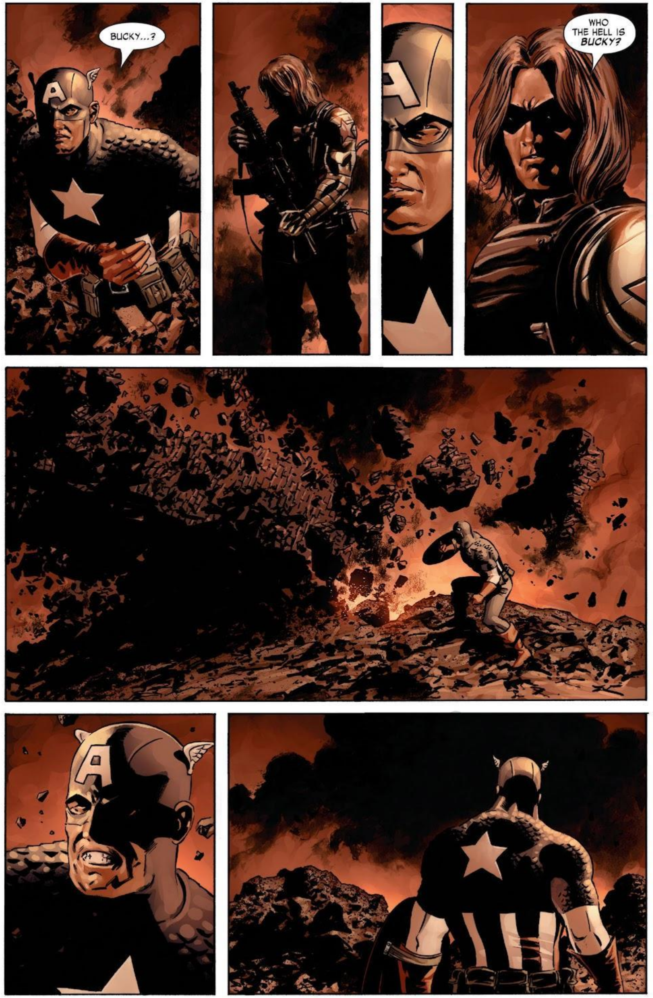


STORY WENT THAT THEY KEPT HIM *ON ICE* AND ONLY WOKE HIM UP FOR THE BIG GIGS. HE'D BE IN *STASIS* FOR FIVE YEARS...THEN OUT IN THE WORLD FOR SIX MONTHS WORKING...
...AND BACK TO RIP VAN WINKLE-LAND ONCE THE *BODIES* HIT THE MORGUE.
BUT LIKE I SAID, UNTIL TODAY, THE WINTER SOLDIER WAS A *MYTH.*
SOMEONE FOR THE SUITS TO HANG SUSPICIOUS DEATHS ON, BUT FAR AS I CAN TELL, NO ONE EVER REALLY *BELIEVED* HE EXISTED.
BUT I DO, BECAUSE I'VE GOT THIS PICTURE FROM LAST WEEK AT DULLES INTERNATIONAL... HERE HE IS *AGAIN,* ABOUT THREE YEARS OLDER THAN HE WAS IN '76...
...AND LEAVING THE BAGGAGE TURNSTILES WHERE WE LATER FOUND THE WEAPON THAT KILLED THE RED SKULL.
NICK...TAKE A STEP BACK HERE. WHAT ARE YOU SAYING?
YOU CAN'T *SERIOUSLY* BE IMPLYING THAT THIS WINTER SOLDIER PERSON IS *BUCKY?*
WHY DON'T YOU TELL ME? YOU'RE THE ONE WHO SAW HIM LAST NIGHT...


WHUDD
KRAKK
INCREASE ATTACK SPEED BY 20 PERCENT...
INCREASE ATTACK SPEED BY 20 PERCENT...

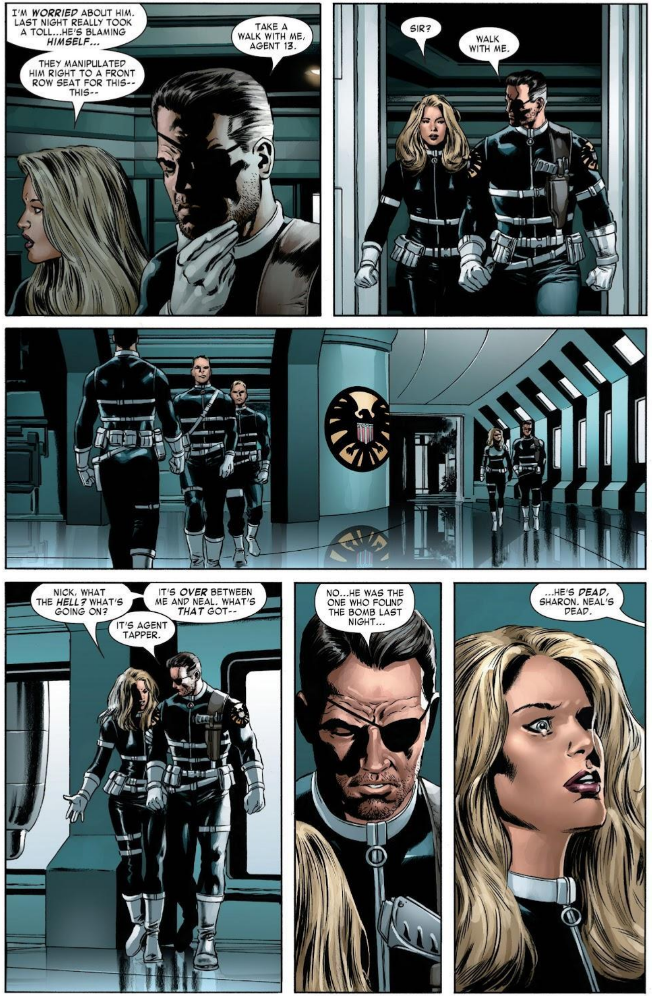

HIVE MIND... WONDERFUL.
SMAK
KICH
UNNH!
KRAK!


AAAAIIEEEEEEE!
KRAK
AHHHH...
AAIIGGGHH!


BUCKY...?
WHO THE HELL IS BUCKY?


I DON'T KNOW WHAT I SAW...
RRRAAAA!


STEVE...?
SO, WHAT'S THE PLAN, NICK? I KNOW YOU MUST HAVE ONE.
I DO. WE'VE GOT A PRIME SUSPECT IN THE TERROR ATTACK ON PHILADELPHIA... ALEKSANDER LUKIN.
AND UNFORTUNATELY, IF HE IS OUR MAN, HE ALSO HAS A FULLY-CHARGED COSMIC CUBE NOW. SO WE'RE GOING TO HAVE TO MOVE FAST.
SMALL TEAM, IN AND OUT, GRAB LUKIN AND GET HIM BACK HERE FOR QUESTIONING BEFORE THEY EVEN KNOW HE'S GONE...
...AND IF WE HAPPEN TO STUMBLE ACROSS ANYONE ELSE...WE'LL JUST CROSS THAT BRIDGE, Y'KNOW...?
I'M IN.
I KNOW.


I'M WORRIED ABOUT HIM. LAST NIGHT REALLY TOOK A TOLL...HE'S BLAMING HIMSELF...
THEY MANIPULATED HIM RIGHT TO A FRONT ROW SEAT FOR THIS-- THIS--
TAKE A WALK WITH ME, AGENT 13.
SIR?
WALK WITH ME.
NICK, WHAT THE HELL? WHAT'S GOING ON?
IT'S OVER BETWEEN ME AND NEAL. WHAT'S THAT GOT--
IT'S AGENT TAPPER.
NO...HE WAS THE ONE WHO FOUND THE BOMB LAST NIGHT...
...HE'S DEAD, SHARON. NEAL'S DEAD.


April 1945, the English Channel, near the Channel Islands
<ANYTHING?>
<I CANNOT BE SURE, COMRADE... THIS TIME OF YEAR THERE IS MUCH ICE IN THE WATER...>
<AND WE HAVE NOT TESTED THIS NEW SONAR SYSTEM YET, SO-->
<WE MUST BE ON OUR WAY. THESE WATERS ARE CLOSELY GUARDED BY THE BRITISH. IF THEY FIND US SNEAKING THROUGH THEM WITHOUT ALLIED APPROVAL...>
<DON'T BE A COWARD, SMISLOV. THIS IS THE FINEST VESSEL IN THE SOVIET FLEET. OUR SONAR SHIELDING IS BETTER THAN EVEN OUR ALLIES COULD HOPE FOR...>
<NOT THAT THEY'LL EVER HEAR OF IT.>
<FORGIVE ME, BUT WE'RE RISKING SO MUCH ON A FOOL'S ERRAND. WHAT CHANCE DO WE--?>
<COMRADE KARPOV!>
"<THERE'S SOMETHING OUT THERE.>"



<IT'S NOT CAPTAIN AMERICA...WHAT IS THIS, KARPOV?>
<IT IS HOPE, MY FRIEND...FOR THE FUTURE...>


CAPTAIN AMERICA
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During the dark days of the early 1940s, a covert military experiment turned Steve Rogers into America's first Super-Soldier, CAPTAIN AMERICA.

Throughout the war, Cap and his partner Bucky fought alongside our infantry and with a group of heroes known as the Invaders. In the closing months of WWII, Captain America and Bucky were both presumed dead in an explosion over the Arctic Ocean.

Decades later, a figure was found trapped in ice, and Captain America was revived. Having slept through more than half of the 20th century, Steve Rogers awakened to a world he never imagined, a world where war had moved from the battlefield to the city streets...A world in dire need of...

CAPTAIN AMERICA

THE WINTER SOLDIER Part 2



Captain America's life has become a living nightmare. Beginning with the murder of the Red Skull and the theft of the Cosmic Cube, Cap and his allies at S.H.I.E.L.D. were led on a wild goose chase across the globe, only to be caught flat-footed when General Aleksander Lukin--the man responsible for the Skull's death and current possessor of the Cosmic Cube--set off a WMD on American soil. To make matters worse, Lukin's main operative appears to be a man known as the Winter Soldier, a mysterious Cold War assassin who many in the intelligence community still believe to be a myth. But Nick Fury doesn't think so anymore, and along with S.H.I.E.L.D. Agent 13--Cap's old girlfriend Sharon Carter--he attempts to convince Cap that not only is the Winter Soldier real, but that somehow, he is Cap's old partner, Bucky Barnes.

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AHHHH!
QUIET NOW.
...UNNNNHH...
SKKRRKK
AAIIEEEE!
TELL YA WHAT, GIRLIE.
KEEP THAT MOUTH SHUT, AND YOU MAY JUST GET OUT OF HERE ALIVE...


Above the Altai Mountains— Mongolia
ETA IN NINETY MINUTES, COLONEL FURY.
GOOD. ANY SIGN OF TROUBLE?
NO SIR, ALL CLEAR SO FAR.
WHAT?
NOTHING.
IT'S NEVER NOTHING WITH YOU. WHAT IS IT? SPEAK.
WE'RE HEADING INTO A FIREFIGHT, SHARON. MAYBE A BIG ONE.
AND I DON'T WANT US GOING INTO IT WITH OUR OWN BAGGAGE, TOO.
YEAH? WELL, YOU SHOULD HAVE THOUGHT OF THAT EARLIER, THEN, SHOULDN'T YOU?


Brooklyn, New York
Yesterday
HEY!
OH, HEY SHARON...
WHAT THE HELL DO YOU THINK YOU'RE DOING, YOU SON OF A %#$&?!
WELL, I JUST FINISHED A TWENTY MILE RUN, AND I WAS PLANNING TO WORK ON THE HEAVY BAG FOR A WHILE...
DON'T TRY AND GET CUTE WITH THIS, STEVE ROGERS!
YOU TOLD FURY TO TAKE ME OFF THE TEAM FOR THE KRONAS OP.
DANGER
HIGH VOLTAGE
HE TOLD YOU?
NO, YOU DID...JUST NOW.


LIKE NICK FURY'S GOING TO GIVE YOU UP.
WHY DON'T WE TAKE THIS INSIDE?
JUST TELL ME WHAT YOU'RE THINKING. I'M ONE OF THE BEST FIELD AGENTS THEY'VE GOT.
IDENTITY-- STEVE ROGERS. ACCESS GRANTED.
SURE YOU ARE, BUT YOU'RE TOO CLOSE TO THIS ONE.
OH, AND YOU'RE NOT?
NOT THE WAY YOU ARE.
I WANT JUSTICE FOR THOSE PEOPLE WHO DIED IN PHILADELPHIA, AND I WANT ANSWERS...
...YOU'RE LOOKING FOR REVENGE.
OH, YOU ARE SO FULL OF IT!
YOU DON'T THINK I CAN TELL WHEN YOU'RE KEEPING YOUR ANGER BOTTLED UP?
JUST ADMIT THAT YOU DON'T WANT ME ALONG BECAUSE YOU'RE SCARED...
OF WHAT?
THAT I'LL KILL HIM... BUCKY.

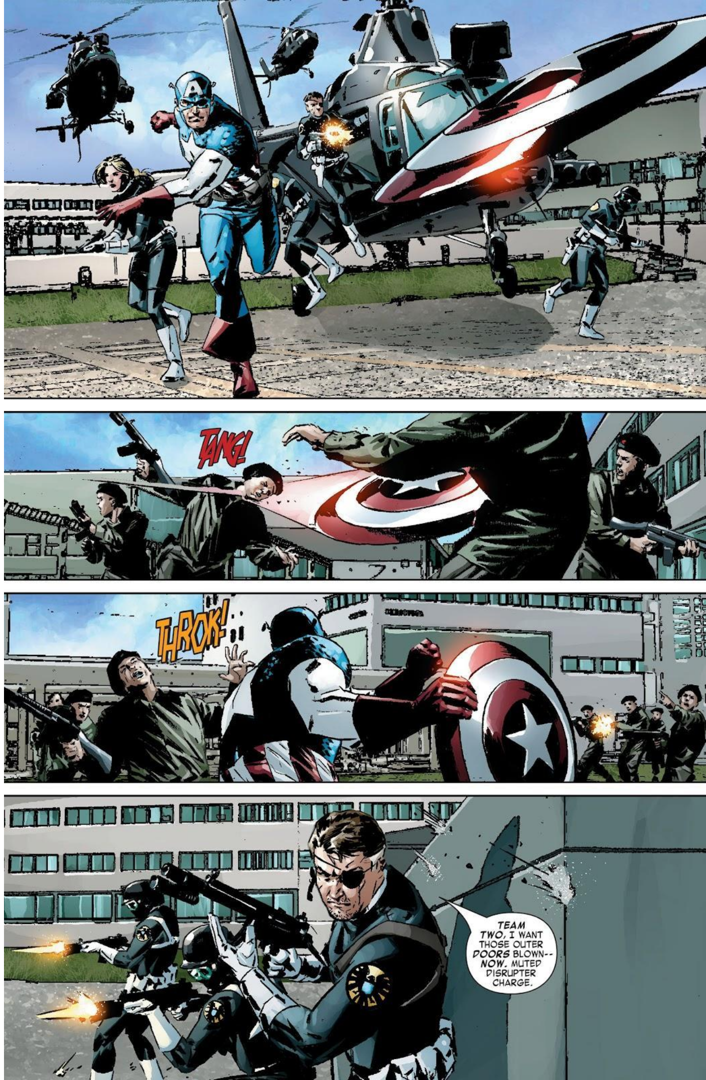

THAT'S NOT-- THAT'S NOT TRUE...
AND WE DON'T KNOW THAT'S WHO WE'RE DEALING WITH.
I SAW HIM WITH MY OWN EYES, STEVE. I HEARD HIS VOICE.
YOU DIDN'T KNOW HIM.
DO YOU KNOW HOW MANY TIMES I WATCHED THE NEWSREELS OF YOU AND HIM FROM THE WAR?
I KNOW HIS VOICE.
THAT CAN ALL BE FAKED... BUCKY WOULD NEVER HAVE DONE WHAT THIS WINTER SOLDIER HAS...
DAMN IT. SOMEONE I LOVED DIED IN PHILADEPHIA LAST WEEK...AND I'M GOING TO SEE HIS KILLER BROUGHT IN.
YOU CAN LIVE IN DENIAL FOR AS LONG AS YOU WANT...
...BUT I AM GOING ON THAT MISSION TOMORROW.


COLONEL FURY? WE'RE PICKING UP RADAR SIGNATURES.
CAN THEY SEE US?
NOT YET. SHOULD I RADIO IN OUR AUTHORIZATION BEFORE--
NO. TURN ON RADAR INVISIBILITY, MAINTAIN RADIO SILENCE.
COPY THAT TO THE OTHER CHOPPERS.
SIR? WE'RE FLYING OVER SOVEREIGN TERRITORY... IT'S AGAINST PROTOCOL TO--I MEAN, THIS IS LIKE...
AN INTERNATIONAL INCIDENT? I'M WELL AWARE, KID.
JUST FOLLOW ORDERS AND YOU'LL BE FINE...
...LEAVE THE RED TAPE TO THE BIG BOYS.


New York City Two Days Ago
ANY REASON WE'RE NOT MEETING ON THE HELICARRIER, NICK?
YEAH, A DAMN GOOD ONE.
CARE TO TELL ME?
NOT REALLY... BUT I WILL.
I CAN'T GET CLEARANCE FOR THE OP.
THEY TURNED YOU DOWN?
I DIDN'T EVEN ASK, BECAUSE WHAT WE'VE GOT IS SO SLIM, THERE'S JUST NO WAY.
THE MAN IS A MASS-MURDERER. A *TERRORIST*. HOW CAN--
THE MAN IS *SMART*, TOO. HE DID JUST ENOUGH SO *WE'D* KNOW IT WAS HIM...
...BUT LEFT US NO WAY TO *PROVE* IT.


HELL, HIS HANDS ARE SO CLEAN IT'S DISGUSTING...
ACCORDING TO THE EVIDENCE, *JACK MONROE* IS THE PRIME SUSPECT IN BOTH THE MURDER OF THE RED SKULL *AND* THE BOMBING IN PHILLY.
JACK...
ANOTHER THING THIS LUKIN HAS TAKEN FROM ME.
ANYWAY, WE'RE GOING IN REGARDLESS. BUT IT'S GONNA BE TRICKY.
WHEN LUKIN DISAPPEARED OFF THE MAP IN RUSSIA, IT TURNS OUT HIS FIRST MOVE WAS TO PURCHASE LAND FROM CHINA, ALONG THE MONGOLIAN BORDER.
THE LEGALITY OF THIS IS SHAKY, BUT THAT PIECE OF LAND IS THE *HEADQUARTERS* OF KRONAS INTERNATIONAL. IT'S A CORPORATE-OWNED COUNTRY, BASICALLY.
LIKE HE STARTED HIS OWN LITTLE EMPIRE.
AND WE'RE GOING TO TOPPLE IT?
IN TWO DAYS. OUR INTEL SAYS LUKIN AND THE MEMBERS OF THE BOARD ARE HAVIN' A POWWOW ABOUT THEIR NEW MERGER WITH ROXXON. SO THEY'LL ALL BE THERE...
THAT WORKS FOR ME... BUT...
WHAT?
WE NEED TO TALK ABOUT AGENT 13'S INVOLVEMENT--

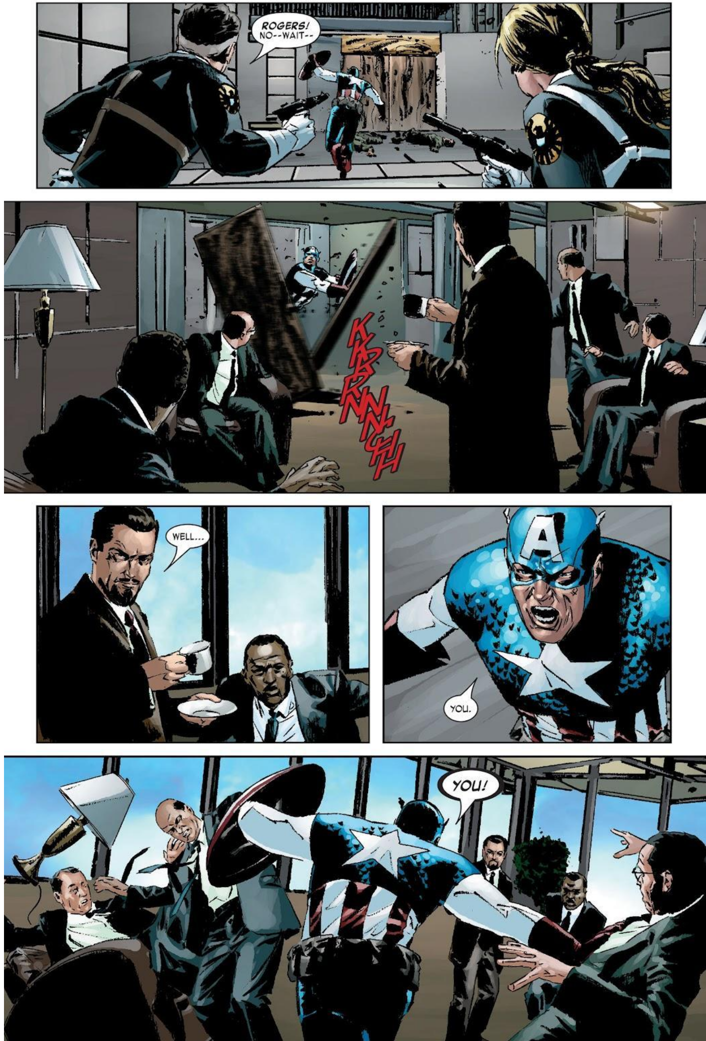

I TRUST YOU TWO HAVE STOPPED BUTTIN' HEADS OVER THIS MISSION?
BASICALLY.
WE'RE FINE.
RIGHT THEN, LET'S SUIT UP, PEOPLE.
OUR TARGET IS IN POSSESSION OF THE COSMIC CUBE, SO SURPRISE IS VITAL. ALL WEAPONS SILENCED. ALL CONTACT OVER SECURE CHANNEL.
WE HIT THE GROUND RUNNING IN ONE MINUTE.


TANG!
THROK!
TEAM TWO, I WANT THOSE OUTER DOORS BLOWN--NOW. MUTED DISRUPTER CHARGE.


UHHNN!
SMAK
I HAD THAT GUY.
I DON'T DOUBT IT...
I'M STILL MAD AT YOU. THIS DOESN'T CHANGE ANYTHING.
I DON'T DOUBT THAT, EITHER.


LET'S HEAR IT, KIRKMAN... GOOD NEWS ONLY THIS TIME.
THAT'S MOSTLY WHAT I'VE GOT, SIR. ALARM WAS NEUTRALIZED BEFORE IT SOUNDED, AND ALL SECURITY PERSONNEL ARE ACCOUNTED FOR.
NO CASUALTIES, BUT A FEW SERIOUS WOUNDED.
DOES LUKIN KNOW WE'RE COMIN' OR NOT?
ACCORDING TO THEIR SYSTEM, THEY'RE IN A SOUNDPROOF BOARDROOM ON THE 41ST FLOOR, AWAY FROM THE FRONT WINDOWS, BUT THEY PROBABLY FELT THAT EXPLOSION.
I'D GIVE OUR ELEMENT OF SURPRISE A CONSERVATIVE ESTIMATE OF ONE MORE MINUTE.
--UNDERSTAND ME? WHERE IS LUKIN'S ASSASSIN?
STEVE, LEAVE HIM, HE'S OUT OF IT.
CAP? YOU COMIN'? WE DON'T GOT A LOTTA TIME HERE.
YEAH...I'M COMING.
WE'LL FIND HIM, STEVE...AFTER WE GET LUKIN.
I KNOW.
I JUST WANT ANSWERS.


KIRKMAN?
LEFT END OF THE HALL. TWO GUARDS ON THE DOOR, FACING US.
NOT A PROBLEM.
SMAK
WAP


ROGERS! NO--WAIT--
WELL...
YOU.
YOU!


WHERE IS HE?!
WHERE?!
...I'M SURE I ...DON'T KNOW...WHO YOU MEAN... CAPTAIN...
STAND DOWN, CAPTAIN! RIGHT NOW!
THAT IS A DIRECT ORDER!
AW, HELL...
WHO IS THAT?
CHIEF OF STAFF TO THE VP... AND RIGHT NEXT TO HIM, ASSISTANT TO THE SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE U.N.
OH *&^%@!
I SAID, NOW, CAPTAIN!

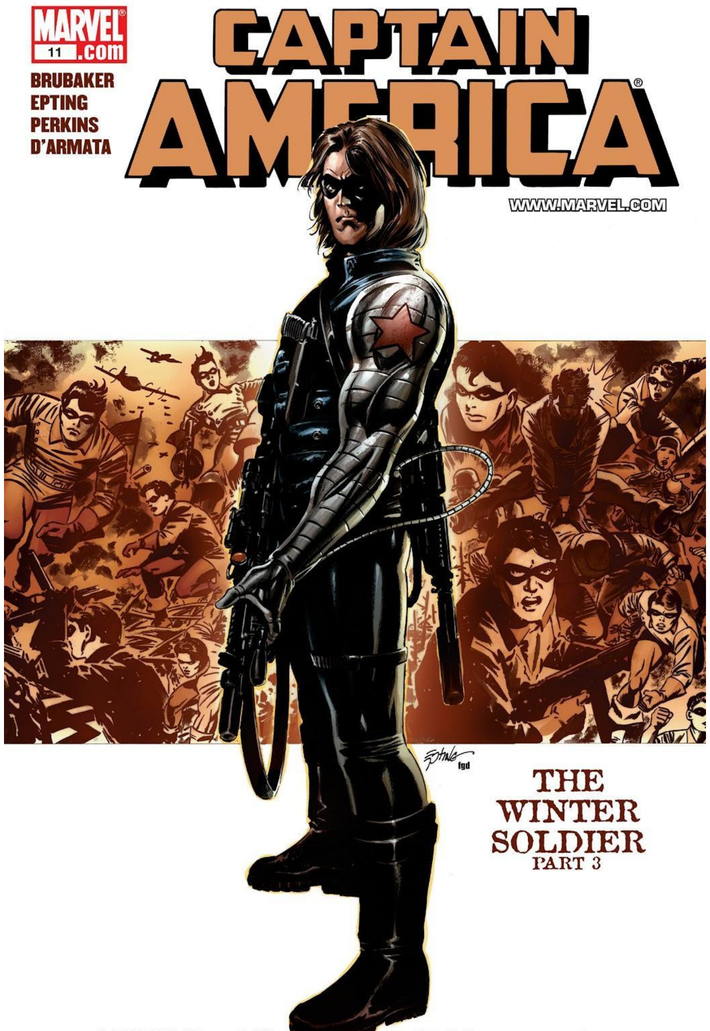

YOU'RE FROM THE WHITE HOUSE?
THAT'S RIGHT...THE KRONAS CORP RECENTLY BOUGHT OUT ROXXON. WE'RE HERE WORKING ON A DEAL FOR A PIPELINE FROM MADRIPOOR.
THIS MAN IS A MASS-MURDERER!
HE'S RESPONSIBLE FOR THE ATTACK IN PHILADELPHIA LAST WEEK!
THIS IS OUTRAGEOUS! HE CAN'T BE SERIOUS?
WHAT IS THIS, FURY? I THOUGHT THE PHILLY BOMBING WAS POINTING TO SOME ROGUE... JACK MARLOW OR SOMEBODY.
MONROE, SIR...AND WE BELIEVE HE WAS JUST A SCAPEGOAT.
DO YOU HAVE SOME EVIDENCE OF MR. LUKIN'S INVOLVEMENT, THEN?
NOT AT THIS TIME.
SO LET ME JUST GET THIS STRAIGHT.
YOU MOUNTED AN ASSAULT ON SOVEREIGN TERRITORY AGAINST AN IMPORTANT FRIEND TO THE U.S. AND THE U.N...ON A HUNCH?
YES SIR.
BUT THERE'S MORE TO IT THAN THAT...
I SHOULD HOPE THERE IS, COLONEL FURY...AND THE SECRETARY-GENERAL WILL WANT TO KNOW EXACTLY WHAT THAT IS WHEN YOU MEET WITH HIM TOMORROW.
OF COURSE, SIR.
ALL RIGHT, PEOPLE, CLEAR OUT.
NO!


WE ARE NOT LEAVING WITHOUT LUKIN, NICK!
YEAH, WE ARE.
ACTUALLY, CAPTAIN... YOU'RE LEAVING AFTER YOU APOLOGIZE TO MR. LUKIN.
WHAT?
STEVE, C'MON... LET IT GO.
WE LOST THIS ONE.
I'M STILL WAITING, CAPTAIN...
THEN YOU CAN WAIT TILL HELL FREEZES OVER...AND TELL YOUR BOSS I'M DISAPPOINTED IN HIM.
THE UNITED STATES, OF COURSE, FORMALLY APOLOGIZES FOR THIS INCIDENT, ALEKSANDER... I CAN'T IMAGINE WHAT GOT INTO THEM.
BUT I ASSURE YOU THERE WILL BE CONSEQUENCES.
YES, I SHOULD HOPE SO...


AND WHAT EXACTLY WAS THE POINT OF THAT, ALEK?
YOU COULD HAVE COST US EVERYTHING...
YOU ARE BECOMING MORE LIKE A WOMAN EVERY DAY, LEON...SHOULD I MAKE THAT MORE THAN JUST A SIMILARITY OF TEMPERAMENT?
YOU? YOU WOULDN'T... HOW COULD YOU EVEN THREATEN--
RELAX, OLD FRIEND... I'M SORRY. YOU'RE RIGHT.
I DON'T KNOW WHAT CAME OVER ME.
THAT THING IS CURSED, ALEK... EVERY TIME YOU TOUCH IT I FEAR FOR YOUR SANITY.
DON'T BE MELODRAMATIC. I HAVE IT UNDER CONTROL, AND DON'T WORRY SO...
...I HAVE NO PLANS TO USE THE CUBE FOR OTHER THAN A FEW SMALL THINGS.


HEY...THIS IS JUST A SETBACK, STEVE...
IT WAS A DISASTER. LUKIN PLAYED US, AGAIN...LAUGHED IN OUR FACES.
YEAH, WELL...HE'S NOT GOING ANYWHERE.
HE DOESN'T HAVE TO. HE'S GOT THE CUBE... AND HE MAY AS WELL HAVE DIPLOMATIC IMMUNITY.
NO...I'M GONNA NAIL HIM. ONE WAY OR ANOTHER...
I HOPE SO, NICK... JUST SO I CAN SEE THAT GRIN WIPED OFF HIS SMUG FACE.
YOU'RE TOO SOFT, ROGERS...
...I WON'T BE HAPPY UNTIL I SEE THAT MAN DEAD.


Secure Government Re-Education Facility— Just outside Reno, Nevada
UK!
YOU... KILLED HIM...
NICE'A YOU TO NOTICE.
OH GOD...ARE YOU GOING TO KILL ME?
DAMN...THESE HEADSHRINKERS REALLY DID A NUMBER ON YOU, DIDN'T THEY?
YOU EVEN KNOW YOUR OWN NAME ANYMORE?
OF COURSE I DO...IT'S ERICA. ERICA HOLSTEIN.
NO, IT AIN'T. YOU'RE SYNTHIA SCHMIDT, GIRL...
...THE DAUGHTER OF THE RED SKULL.


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THE WINTER SOLDIER
PART 3

During the dark days of the early 1940s, a covert military experiment turned Steve Rogers into America's first Super-Soldier, CAPTAIN AMERICA.

Throughout the war, Cap and his partner Bucky fought alongside our infantry and with a group of heroes known as the Invaders. In the closing months of WWII, Captain America and Bucky were both presumed dead in an explosion over the English Channel.

Decades later, a figure was found trapped in ice, and Captain America was revived. Having slept through more than half of the 20th century, Steve Rogers awakened to a world he never imagined, a world where war had moved from the battlefield to the city streets...a world in dire need of...

CAPTAIN AMERICA

THE WINTER SOLDIER Part 3



Captain America's life has become a living nightmare. Beginning with the murder of the Red Skull and the theft of the Cosmic Cube, Cap and his allies at S.H.I.E.L.D. were led on a wild-goose chase across the globe, only to be caught flat-footed, when General Aleksander Lukin--the man responsible for the Skull's death and current possessor of the Cosmic Cube--set off a WMD on American soil. And even more unfortunate for our heroes, Lukin is the CEO of the KRONAS Corporation, whose ties to governments around the world protect him from suspicion. Unless there is irrefutable proof of his guilt, Cap and Fury can't touch him, and Lukin has covered his tracks well.

To make matters worse, Lukin's main operative appears to be a man known as the Winter Soldier, a mysterious Cold War assassin who may in fact be Cap's old partner, Bucky Barnes. But how is that possible?

Writer Ed Brubaker | Penciler Steve Epting | Finishes Steve Epting & Mike Perkins | Colorist Frank D'Armata | Letterer VC's Randy Gentile

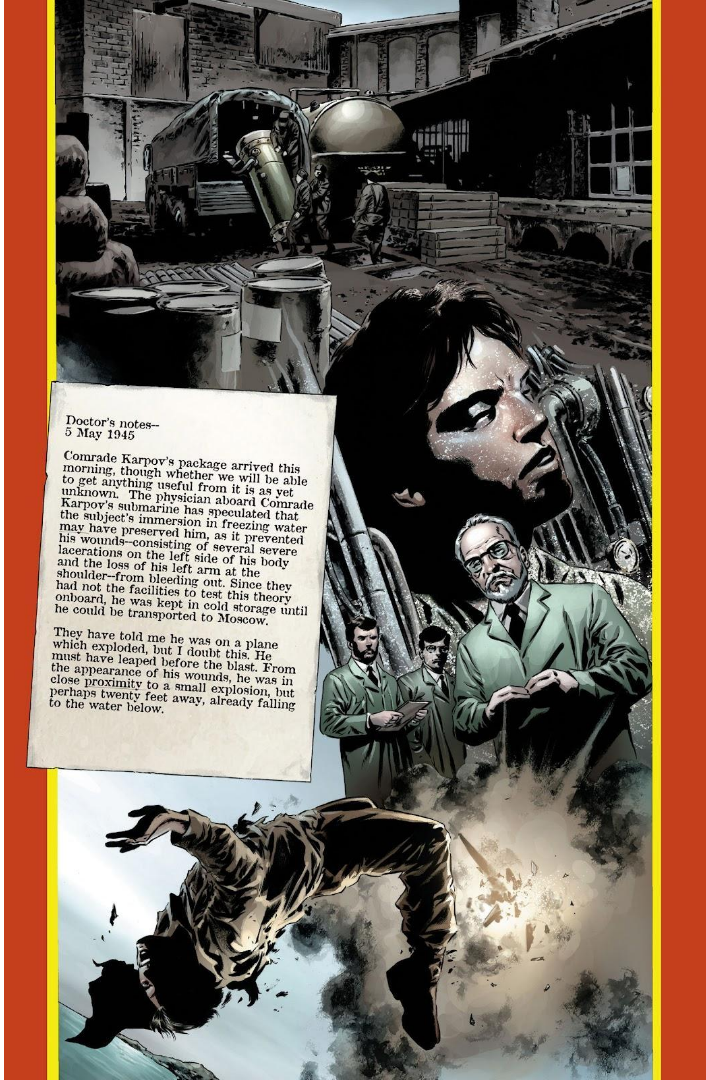
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Captain America created by Joe Simon & Jack Kirby

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Brooklyn, New York... Steve Rogers' Secret Residence
WHAT--?
SECURITY REPORT, LAST HOUR.
ALL ENTRIES SECURE. NO ACTIVITY.
NO SECURITY BREACH?
NEGATIVE. NO ACTIVITY.
SO, WHERE THE HELL DID *THIS* COME FROM, THEN...?
DAMN IT.
PROJECT WINTER SOLDIER: CONFIDENTIAL FILES


Doctor's notes--
5 May 1945
Comrade Karpov's package arrived this morning, though whether we will be able to get anything useful from it is as yet unknown. The physician aboard Comrade Karpov's submarine has speculated that the subject's immersion in freezing water may have preserved him, as it prevented his wounds--consisting of several severe lacerations on the left side of his body and the loss of his left arm at the shoulder--from bleeding out. Since they had not the facilities to test this theory onboard, he was kept in cold storage until he could be transported to Moscow.
They have told me he was on a plane which exploded, but I doubt this. He must have leaped before the blast. From the appearance of his wounds, he was in close proximity to a small explosion, but perhaps twenty feet away, already falling to the water below.


Tomorrow we will begin the process of allowing the subject's body to regain its heat, in the hope that his blood will still be viable for testing. We are using an approach for this that one of our spies smuggled out of Hitler's most secret laboratories.
I have not personally witnessed it, but have read of cases where a body that is flash-frozen has been completely revived. The case of the mother and child in Stalingrad frozen in a snowbank along the road for two hours, for example.
I have little hope that will be the case here, but Comrade Karpov and his superiors are more interested in the analysis of his vital fluids than in his revivification.
Apparently Comrade Karpov once saw the subject in action, and believes it probable that he, like his partner Captain America, has the much-rumored Super-Soldier Formula flowing through-- or rather, frozen inside-- his veins.


Doctor's notes
7 May 1945
Yesterday exceeded all expectation. Subject's body temperature was increased over the course of several hours, and his wounds were dealt with, to prevent bleeding. When his temp. was close enough to normal, it was as we thought...his tissue and blood were still viable.
But, as I predicted, he was in fact deceased. Either the explosion, the fall, or his time in the water, had killed him.
One of my colleagues had an idea that had not occurred to me. Since he had been frozen so soon after his demise, he suggested trying to revive him as if he were only recently deceased.
We administered electricity, Cardio-Pulmonary Resuscitation, and adrenaline directly into the heart.


And though I can still hardly believe it, the subject was brought back from death.
It is not exactly the miracle that I have previously read of, though, perhaps because of the time the subject was submerged in the icy waters, or perhaps because of the explosion that put him there.
But whatever the reason, though we now have a live subject, there appears to be considerable brain damage. The subject has no memory of his previous life.
What he does have, as he tragically demonstrated on two of our aides -- remarkable with only one arm -- are reflex memories.


He knows the things he did before; how to fight, particularly, how to speak four languages, including, thankfully, Russian, and many other things. But he has no idea how or why he knows these things.
He is nearly a blank slate, but an incredibly dangerous one. Thus, he is being sedated while further testing is completed.
Doctor's notes 21 May 1945
Two weeks of work, to no success. A battery of blood tests were run on the subject, but it appears he is nothing more than human. There is not a trace of any additive or "super" formula in his system.
After much discussion between our superiors and Comrade Karpov, it was decided that the subject is to be put back into stasis, for what purpose, I do not know.


MAJOR GENERAL VASILY KARPOV
HEAD OF SPECIAL SECTION
DEPARTMENT X
TOP KGB CLEARANCE ONLY
Project: Winter Soldier -
June 1954
Volkov's man at MI-6, Parsifal, has proved his worth. The schematics for Advanced Robotic Appendages and Attachment he provided two months past were revolutionary. Our science team finished a working prototype and attached it to the American without incident. With the new appendage in place, clearance was given for Department X to begin work on the Winter Soldier Project.
It has long been my plan to turn this American symbol back against our enemies. He was no aid to developing our own Super-Soldiers, but he will still be a valuable tool, in the right hands.


It was our own experiments in Mental Implantation during Sensory Deprivation that provided the breakthrough. And because of the American's memory loss, it was quite simple. We were able to reprogram the American's mind.
We gave him a purpose, and we made him loyal to no one but us.
Once that was accomplished, we had simply to train and prepare him for a field evaluation.
Hopes are high that he will be a successful operative. I believe, because he walks and talks just like them, because he exudes "America" with his every breath, that the enemy will never see him coming.


Report–
Codename: Winter Soldier–
Field Test, 5 November 1954
All objectives achieved.
Codename: Winter Soldier
encounters no difficulty
on mission.
As predicted, Americans
and allies mistake him
for one of their own.
Allow him unimpeded
entrance into West
Berlin.
Winter Soldier spends evening
in Berlin nightclub among
many U.S. and U.K. servicemen,
unsuspected.
Jeep overturns at 02:45 killing
three soldiers en route to base
from nightclub. Crash not investigated.
Assumed drunken roadway accident.
On mission completion,
Codename: Winter Soldier
crosses border, returns to
handlers without incident.
Future assignments
under evaluation.


WINTER SOLDIER–
MISSION REPORT.
Cairo, 11 January 1955.
Objective: United Nations
Diplomatic Negotiation Team.
All targets eliminated without
incident. Fire reported
as accident.
WINTER SOLDIER–
MISSION REPORT.
West Berlin, 14 May 1955.
Objective: NATO General
James Keller. Target
eliminated with prejudice.
WINTER SOLDIER–
MISSION REPORT.
Madripoor, 1 January 1956.
Objective: British Ambassador
Dalton Graines. Target eliminated,
along with acceptable collateral
damage. Madripoor authorities
have no leads.


Winter Soldier. Mission Report.
Algeria, 1 April 1956.
Objective: French Defense Minister
Jacques Dupuy. Target eliminated
with prejudice. Algerian Nationalist
Movement implicated.
Winter Soldier.
Mission Report.
Paris, 12 May 1956.
Objective: Algerian
Peace Conference Envoy.
All targets eliminated.
Winter Soldier. Mission Report.
Mexico City, 17 February 1957.
Objective: United States Colonel
Jefferson Hart. Target eliminated
with prejudice.


Project: Winter Soldier.
Scientific analysis. 7 June 1957.
A comprehensive mental evaluation of Codename:
Winter Soldier was conducted over the course of
the past week. Diagnoses are varied, but most in
Dept. X Science Team believe that his mental state
is becoming unstable. In the three years since he
was awakened from stasis, it appears his mind
is seeking to fill in the holes in his memory,
or possibly rebelling against the implanted
programming he received originally. The subject
has recently begun to exhibit more than usual
curiosity, even to the point of questioning orders
from superiors, and once in the past month, he
attacked a fellow operative, nearly killing him. On
interrogation, he could not explain his actions.
One theory is that just as he has reflex-memories,
which allow him to be such an effective
operative, he may also have a deeply buried
sense of who he was, or at least of what kind
of person he was. As such, this deeply buried
idea may be causing him mental stress and
triggering turmoil in his thoughts. Another
theory, which is more disturbing, is that he
may actually be remembering his previous
life, though in small pieces only. It is
therefore our recommendation that
Codename: Winter Soldier be kept in stasis
between missions, and that he undergo
Mental Implantation at every awakening.
We believe this will correct his instability
issues, so he can continue to be of use to
Department X.


Incident Report.
12 March 1973 re:
Codename: Winter Soldier
I regret to report that after more than fifteen years of selective use around the world, all to great success, last month's Winter Soldier mission into the United States did not go as planned.
The target, Senator Harry Baxtor, was eliminated, and the death was made to appear accidental. But after that, something went wrong.
Codename: Winter Soldier failed to appear at his extraction point.
His handlers waited, and listened in to police transmissions, but he did not arrive, and the local authorities reported nothing that implied he'd been apprehended.

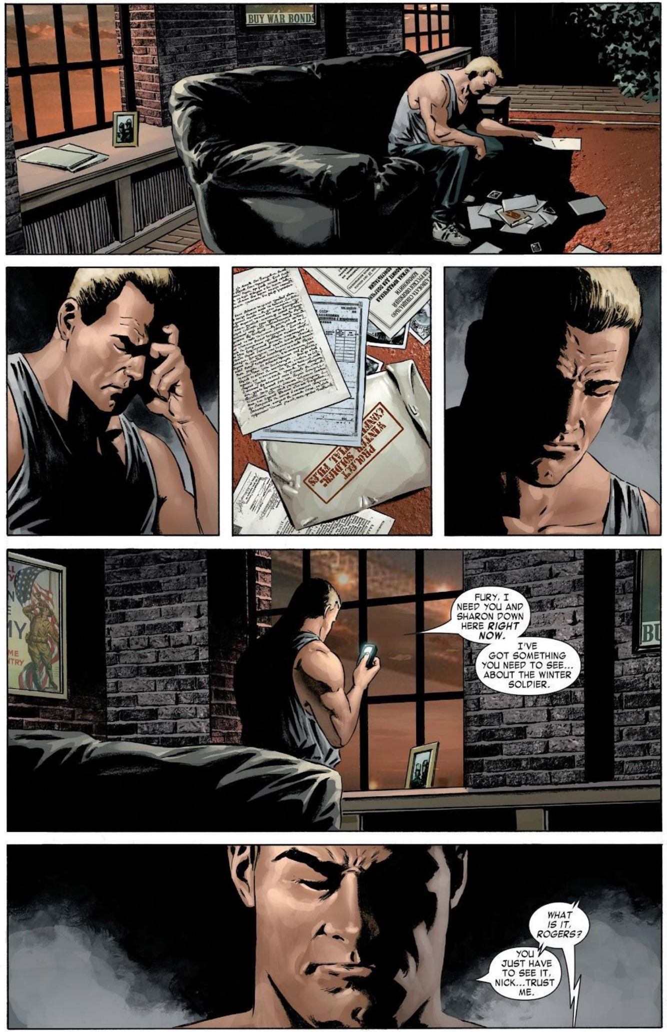

Following protocol, our agents in the U.S. began a wide search for Winter Soldier. All extremes were taken to recover this valuable asset, including several sleeper-agents breaking cover.
Through that considerable effort, we were able to track some of his movements. Security camera footage showed him in civilian garb at the Dallas train station, boarding a train to Chicago.
Interrogation of several passengers onboard the train left the impression that Winter Soldier was confused while onboard. He was apparently confused about what year it was, and appeared uneasy around the other passengers.
In Chicago, he was seen boarding a bus for New York City.
NEW YORK


His movements in New York are unknown to us, but for two weeks he was completely off the grid.
It was only through sheer luck that he was found by one of our agents, sleeping in a flophouse on the Lower East Side.
It took several of our agents, in the garb of New York policemen, to take him into custody.
Yet even after subsequent mental conditioning, Codename Winter Soldier has no answers for his conduct, or any memory of his time out of our control.
While troubling, the incident appears to be an aberration, requiring nothing more than closer watch. It is further recommended that in future he be excluded from missions on American soil.

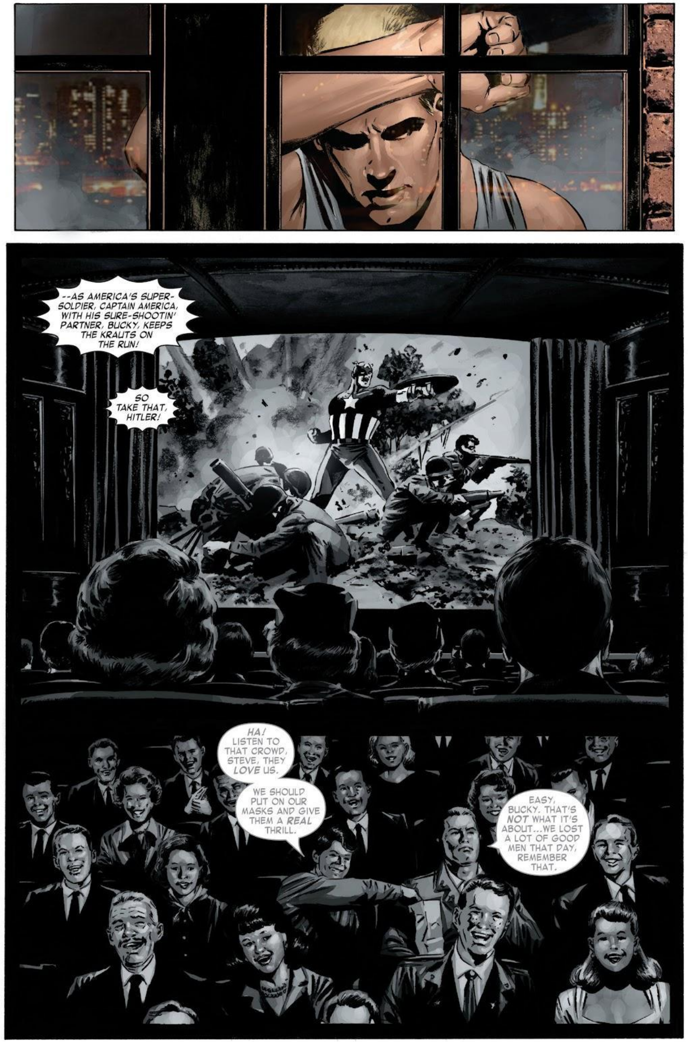

From the Personal Journal of Major General Vasily Karpov-- September 1983
Against advice, I have taken Codename: Winter Soldier to the Middle East as my personal bodyguard. I am getting old and I know there are only a few years left for me, so I wish to spend them watching this twisted creature defend my life.
I almost feel sorry for him, as he tenses up whenever anyone approaches, ready to dive in front of a bullet for me.
It will never make up for what he and his people did to me in the war, how they shamed me in front of my own men, but even after all these years, it still makes me smile to see Captain America's partner serving Mother Russia.
Let us see what kind of damage he can do to his country's efforts in the Middle East. These next few years should be amusing. I am glad that Yuri transferred me. To hell with him.



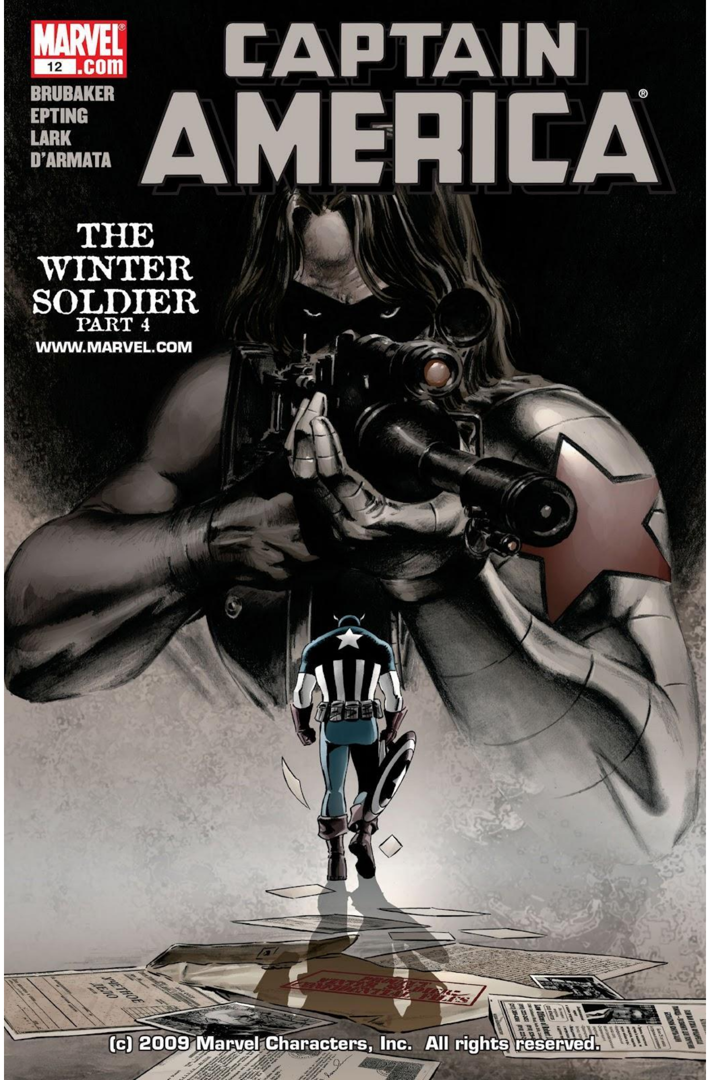
Project Winter Soldier--
Final Orders.
4 August 1988
In accordance with Major General Karpov's final orders before his death, Project Winter Soldier has been decommissioned.
Codename:
Winter Soldier has been placed back into stasis after his years in the Middle East alongside the Major General.
No incidents were reported by the Major General during this time, but it is recommended that if Codename: Winter Soldier is revived from stasis in future, thorough mental re-implantation be done to assure control of the operative.
Codename:
Winter Soldier will be stored at an undisclosed location, along with much of Department X's abandoned experiments.



BUY WAR BONDS
FURY, I NEED YOU AND SHARON DOWN HERE RIGHT NOW.
I'VE GOT SOMETHING YOU NEED TO SEE... ABOUT THE WINTER SOLDIER.
WHAT IS IT, ROGERS?
YOU JUST HAVE TO SEE IT, NICK...TRUST ME.


--AS AMERICA'S SUPER-SOLDIER, CAPTAIN AMERICA, WITH HIS SURE-SHOOTIN' PARTNER, BUCKY, KEEPS THE KRAUTS ON THE RUN!
SO TAKE THAT, HITLER!
HA! LISTEN TO THAT CROWD, STEVE. THEY *LOVE* US.
WE SHOULD PUT ON OUR MASKS AND GIVE THEM A *REAL* THRILL.
EASY, BUCKY. THAT'S *NOT* WHAT IT'S ABOUT...WE LOST A LOT OF GOOD MEN THAT DAY, REMEMBER THAT.


OF *COURSE* I REMEMBER, STEVE... *CRIMINEY.*
I HELD THAT POOR KID'S HAND WHILE HE BLED OUT ON THAT FIELD.
YOU DON'T SEE *THAT* ON A NEWSREEL, THOUGH, DO YOU? NO ONE'S *CHEERING* FOR THAT POOR KID FROM IDAHO.
CRIPES... TORO WAS RIGHT ABOUT YOU.
WHAT? WHAT'D TORO SAY?
YOU'RE TOO SERIOUS. WE GET A *WEEK'S* LEAVE, GET TO GO *HOME* FOR A CHANGE...AND YOU'RE BRINGING THE *WAR* HOME WITH US.
YOU GOTTA LEARN HOW TO RELAX, PAL.
I SEE... AND *TORO* SAID ALL THIS, DID HE?
HA...YOU'RE A *REAL* CUTUP, STEVE.
SOMETIMES I THINK IF YOU DIDN'T HAVE *ME*, THERE WOULDN'T BE A SINGLE PERSON IN THE WORLD WHO *REALLY* UNDERSTOOD YOU...
BUY WAR BONDS


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CAPTAIN AMERICA
THE WINTER SOLDIER
PART 4
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CAPTAIN AMERICA

THE WINTER SOLDIER Part 4



Captain America's life has become a living nightmare, beginning with the murder of the Red Skull and the theft of the Cosmic Cube, and escalating when General Aleksander Lukin--the man responsible for the Skull's death--set off a WMD on American soil.

Lukin's main operative is a man called the Winter Soldier, a mysterious Cold War assassin, and now that Cap has read the secret KGB dossier on the WINTER SOLDIER PROJECT, he knows that the Winter Soldier is in fact his old partner, Bucky Barnes.

Writer Ed Brubaker
Penciler Steve Epting
Finishes Steve Epting & Mike Perkins
Flashback Art Michael Lark
Colorist Frank D'Armata
Letterer VC's Joe Caramagna

Production James Taveras
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AND YOU'VE GOT NO IDEA WHERE THIS CAME FROM?
NO, I'VE GOT A PRETTY DECENT IDEA.
BUY WAR BONDS
THE CUBE?
WHAT ELSE?
BUT WHY?
WHY HAS LUKIN DONE ANY OF THE THINGS HE'S DONE?
BONDS
TO MESS WITH YOUR HEAD, MOST LIKELY.
BUT THIS, IF HE REALLY DID PUT THIS HERE...IT'S LIKE HE'S TIPPING HIS HAND...
I KNOW.
STILL, IT DOES CONTINUE THE "MESSING WITH YOUR HEAD" THEME HE'S BEEN WORKIN'.
YEAH...IT DOES.
BUY WAR BONDS



WELL, LET'S SEE WHAT MY TECHS'VE GOT TO SAY ABOUT ITS AUTHENTICITY...
I'M ASSUMING YOU DON'T MIND IF I TAKE IT?
IT CAN'T GET OUT OF MY HOME FAST ENOUGH, NICK.
YEAH, THIS IS...REALLY MESSED UP.
IT'S A NIGHTMARE.
AND IT MATCHES UP WITH EVERYTHING ELSE WE KNOW ABOUT THE WINTER SOLDIER...
WHICH IS THE ONLY THING THAT'S STOPPING ME FROM TEARING IT TO PIECES.
BECAUSE YOU THINK IT'S THE REAL THING?
I DON'T WANT TO... BUT...
YOU REALIZE WHAT THIS MEANS, IF IT'S LEGIT?
WHAT?


THAT IT'S NOT *REALLY* BUCKY...
IT'S JUST WHATEVER WAS LEFT OF HIM THAT THEY COULD *MANIPULATE* FOR THEIR OWN ENDS.
IS THAT SUPPOSED TO MAKE ME FEEL BETTER?
YEAH.
WELL, IT *DOESN'T*... AND YOU SHOULD READ THAT FILE *CLOSER*, SHARON.
HE KEPT TURNING *AGAINST* THEM, AND HE *DISAPPEARED* WHEN THEY SENT HIM TO AMERICA.
THERE'S SOME PART OF HIM, OF WHO HE IS, STILL *TRAPPED* INSIDE...
SOMEWHERE INSIDE THAT *THING* THEY TURNED HIM INTO, IS WHATEVER'S *LEFT* OF BUCKY BARNES' *HUMANITY*.
WE DON'T KNOW THAT, ROGERS...
HE WAS MY *PARTNER*, DAMN IT...
...HE WAS MY FRIEND...


Camp Lehigh— August, 1941
WHAT DO YOU THINK OF HIM?
WHICH ONE, THE KID?
YEAH, THE *KID*... WHO'S FOUR *WHOLE* YEARS YOUNGER THAN *YOU*, ROGERS.
NICE MOVES. I *RECOGNIZE* A FEW OF THEM.
YOU *SHOULD*. HE'S BEEN WORKING WITH THE SAME MEN WHO TRAINED *YOU*.
AND HE JUST GOT BACK FROM A *MONTH* IN THE U.K. WITH THAT S.A.S. REGIMENT THEY STARTED UP LAST YEAR...
SIR, YOU CAN'T BE THINKING... I MEAN... HE'S *WHAT*, SIXTEEN?
WE BOTH KNOW HE'S NOT THE *ONLY* SIXTEEN-YEAR-OLD IN THE ARMY, ROGERS.



AND HE'S ABOUT THE BEST NATURAL FIGHTER I'VE EVER SEEN. EVEN BEFORE HIS SPECIAL TRAINING.
WHAT'S HIS NAME?
JAMES BUCHANAN BARNES, GOES BY BUCKY. HIS OLD MAN WAS CAREER MILITARY, DIED A FEW YEARS AGO...
BUCKY'S BEEN LIVING HERE SINCE, SORT OF THE CAMP'S KID BROTHER.
WHEN WE TALKED ABOUT THIS BEFORE, ME NEEDING A PARTNER...I NEVER THOUGHT...
I KNOW. BUT JUST LIKE CAPTAIN AMERICA HAS SYMBOLIC VALUE, AN AMERICAN TEENAGER FIGHTING ALONGSIDE HIM... THAT'S A POWERFUL SYMBOL, TOO...
AND IF HE GETS HIS HANDS A LITTLE DIRTIER THAN MOST SOLDIERS WHEN NO ONE'S LOOKING... WELL, THAT'LL BE OUR SECRET, RIGHT?
ALL RIGHT, LET ME MEET HIM, AT LEAST...



STEVE...?
I THOUGHT YOU LEFT WITH FURY.
NO, I WAS HOPING YOU AND I COULD TALK...
I'M NOT REALLY IN A TALKING MOOD.
HOW ABOUT A LISTENING ONE, THEN?
NO, BECAUSE I KNOW WHAT YOU'RE GOING TO SAY.
OH, AND WHAT'S THAT?
YOU THINK BECAUSE HE'S GOT NO MEMORIES OF WHO HE USED TO BE... THAT HE'S JUST SOME PROGRAMMED ASSASSIN...
YOU THINK THAT MAKES IT OKAY TO KILL HIM.


IT'S NOT BUCKY...NOT IN ANY WAY THAT MATTERS.
NOT TO YOU.
ALL HE IS ARE THE PARTS THAT REMEMBER HOW TO KILL, STEVE, AND THAT'S WHAT HE'S DOING...I DON'T GIVE A DAMN ABOUT THE SKULL...
...BUT JACK MONROE, ALL THOSE PEOPLE IN PHILADELPHIA... NEAL--NEAL TAPPER...
THAT'S ALL LUKIN'S DOING, SHARON...YOU'RE BLAMING THE GUN INSTEAD OF THE PERSON PULLING THE TRIGGER.
I KNOW WHO'S RESPONSIBLE. BUT WHAT I'M TRYING TO TELL YOU IS, HE ISN'T YOUR PARTNER-- YOUR FRIEND-- ANYMORE.
AND IF YOU GO INTO THIS THINKING OF HIM LIKE THAT--
DON'T WORRY ABOUT ME.
HE ALREADY DIED, STEVE.
YEAH... I WAS THERE.


THAT DOESN'T CHANGE THE FACT THAT HE'S WALKING AROUND OUT THERE RIGHT NOW, UNDER THE CONTROL OF THE EXACT KIND OF PEOPLE HE SPENT HIS LIFE FIGHTING.
THAT'S NOT WHAT I'M SAYING...
I KNOW YOU'RE GOING THROUGH HELL, STEVE...I JUST WANT TO MAKE SURE WE ALL KNOW WHAT--
I DON'T KNOW ANYTHING ANYMORE, SHARON.
AND I'M BEGINNING TO WONDER IF I EVER DID.
NICK, YEAH... NO, I BLEW IT. I THINK I USED TO KNOW HOW TO TALK TO HIM, BUT...
YEAH. YEAH...MAKE THE CALL, IF YOU CAN...
"...MAYBE HE'LL HAVE BETTER LUCK THAN I DID..."



ONE HUNDRED AND TWENTY BILLION!
MATCHED! AND A THIRTY PERCENT SHARE IN STOCK OPTIONS!
ONE HUNDRED FIFTY!
WAIT! WAIT A DAMN SECOND!
JUST HOLD ON, LUKIN...YOU'RE ENJOYING THIS, SEEING US FALL ALL OVER OURSELVES...
BUT HOW DO WE EVEN KNOW THAT REALLY IS THE COSMIC CUBE?
YOU'RE PHILIP HOCKNEY, RIGHT? FROM CHEMAXONE?
YOU WERE THE DECIDING VOTE THAT REFUSED KRONAS' BUY OUT OFFER?
THAT'S CORRECT.
AND NOW YOU'D LIKE SOME KIND OF DEMONSTRATION THAT THIS REALLY IS WHAT I SAY IT IS?
I THINK WE'RE ALL OWED AT LEAST THAT, DON'T YOU?
WELL, YOU'D THINK THE FACT THAT YOU ARE ALL HERE, AT A SECRET MEETING TOGETHER, WOULD BE PROOF ENOUGH...
SINCE THERE'S NEVER BEEN A TIME WHEN YOU TRAVELED WITHOUT YOUR SECURITY...
AND I CAN ASSURE YOU IT WAS THE CUBE THAT MADE THAT SEEM LIKE A WISE IDEA...WHICH IT WASN'T.
BUT STILL, PERHAPS A MORE CONCRETE DEMONSTRATION IS IN ORDER...



WHAT THE HELL?
HEY!
GENTLEMEN, WHAT YOU NOW SEE BEFORE YOU ARE MERGER AGREEMENTS. THESE PAPERS WILL MAKE YOUR CORPORATIONS SUBSIDIARIES OF KRONAS.
AND AS YOU SIGN THEM, NOTICE HOW THIS CUBE IN MY HAND SPARKLES...
NOTICE HOW YOU SUDDENLY WANT NOTHING IN THE WORLD SO MUCH AS TO BECOME A PART OF KRONAS...
NOW, AREN'T YOU HAPPY YOU ASKED FOR THAT DEMONSTRATION, HOCKNEY?
YES... YES SIR, MR. LUKIN. I AM...
OUR GUESTS WILL BE LEAVING IN A FEW MINUTES, BARTOK, MAKE SURE THEY GET TO THEIR DESTINATIONS SAFELY.
OF COURSE, SIR.

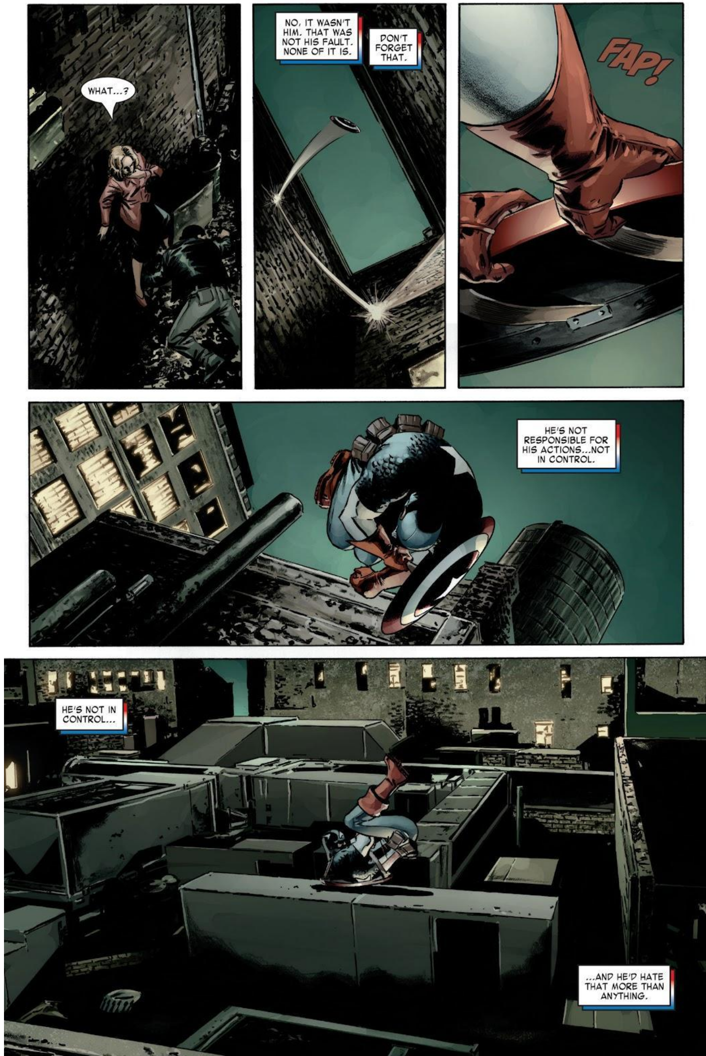

ALEK!
UK...
WHAT IS IT?
...NO-- NOTHING...I'M-- I JUST LOST MY... FOR A MOMENT I THOUGHT--
--I LOST MY...
THIS DAMNED THING!
YOU HONESTLY BELIEVE THIS MUCH POWER COMES WITH NO PRICE?
DON'T YOU TOUCH THAT!
ALEK?
DON'T YOU --!
KNNCH


DAMN IT.
THIS IS NO WAY TO FUNCTION... WORK THROUGH IT, STEVE.
ANGER WILL NOT HELP YOU DEAL WITH THIS.
IT'LL JUST MAKE SURE THAT WHATEVER YOU DO NEXT IS THE WRONG MOVE.
AND YOU CAN'T AFFORD THAT.
YOU'VE LET LUKIN PUSH ALL YOUR BUTTONS TOO EASILY SO FAR... YOU CAN'T AFFORD ANYTHING BUT A CLEAR HEAD FROM THIS POINT ON...
HE'S COUNTING ON YOU...WHETHER HE KNOWS IT OR NOT.
BUCKY IS COUNTING ON YOU.


Arnhem, The Netherlands
September 1944
IT'S NO GOOD, CAP! WE CAN'T HOLD IT!
BUDDA BUDDA BUDDA
OUR INTEL SAYS THE RED SKULL IS ENCAMPED SOMEWHERE ALONG THE RHINE, SO...
...WE'RE GONNA HELP THE BRITISH TAKE THAT BRIDGE, BUCK... ONE WAY OR ANOTHER.
LOOK AT THEM, THEY'VE LOST TOO MANY MEN, CAP...
THEY AREN'T GONNA BE ABLE TO DO THIS...
I KNOW... DAMN IT...
HEY... WHAT IN THE HELL?

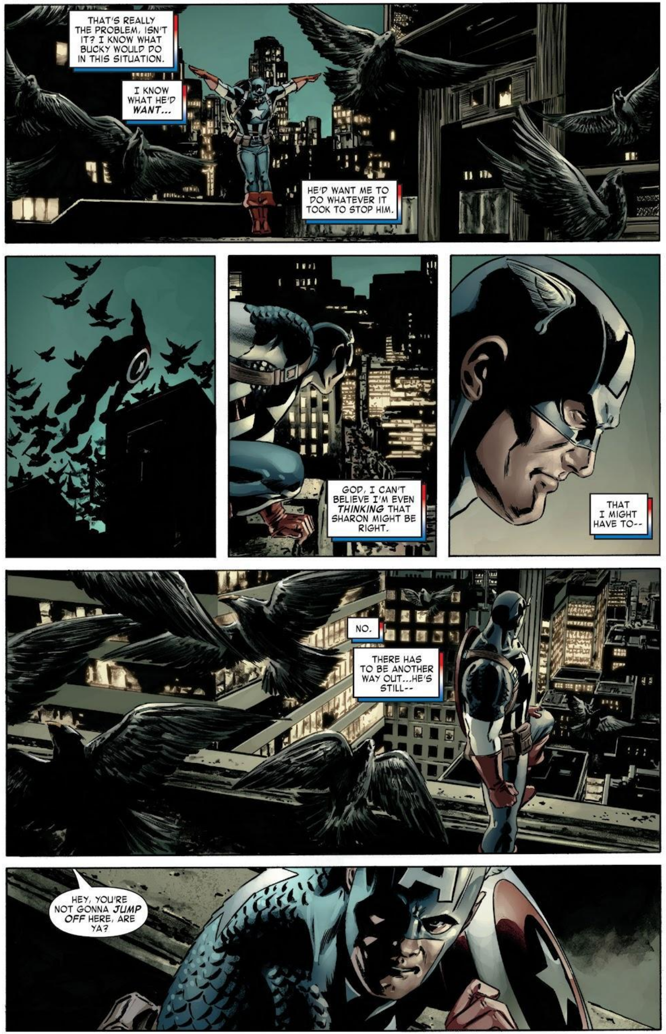

HEY... WHAT IN THE HELL?
THEY'RE SENDING BACK SOME PRISONERS...THAT DOESN'T...
CLIVE...? IS THAT YOU?
HOLD FIRE, MATES... THEY'RE OUR BOYS.
AW GOD...
NOOO!


NOOOO!
HEY-- HEY! STOP IT! NO!
AND SO IS *EVERYBODY ELSE*...COUNTING ON ME.
TH-WANNG
LIKE THE AMERICAN PEOPLE...
...WHO HE *KILLED* HUNDREDS OF, NOT A MONTH AGO.

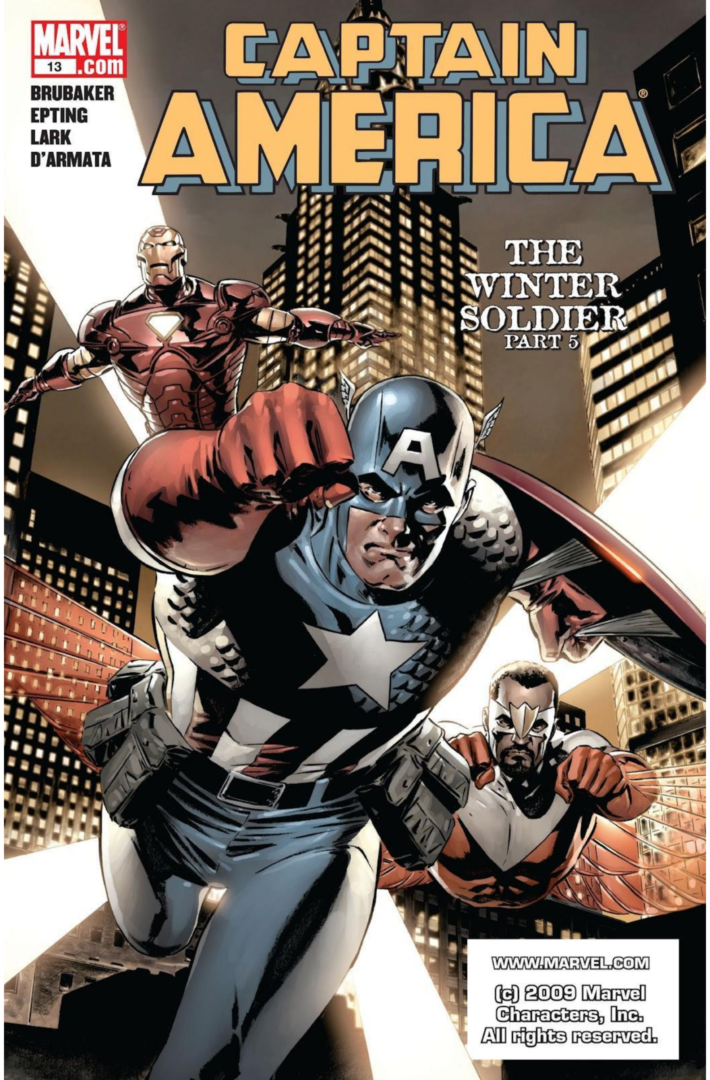

WHAT...?
NO, IT WASN'T HIM. THAT WAS NOT HIS FAULT. NONE OF IT IS.
DON'T FORGET THAT.
FAP!
HE'S NOT RESPONSIBLE FOR HIS ACTIONS...NOT IN CONTROL.
HE'S NOT IN CONTROL...
...AND HE'D HATE THAT MORE THAN ANYTHING.


NO! STAY BACK!
GET AWAY FROM THEM!
WOT'RE THEY ON ABOUT--
GET DOWN!
KRAK KRAK
...UKK--
KLIK


AW, CAP... THOSE SICK NAZI SONS OF--
I KNOW.
...CLIVE... M'MATE...
WHAT'S HE SAYING?
...WOT 'APPENED T' CLIVE...? WUZ ME BEST... BEST...
WE'VE GOT TO MOVE, BUCKY... NOW.
DAMN IT. THIS IS JUST-- FREAKIN' KRAUTS CUT UP THEIR BRAINS, STEVE...
THIS IS...IT'S-- IT'S SICK.


THAT'S REALLY THE PROBLEM, ISN'T IT? I KNOW WHAT BUCKY WOULD DO IN THIS SITUATION.
I KNOW WHAT HE'D *WANT...*
HE'D WANT ME TO DO WHATEVER IT TOOK TO STOP HIM.
GOD, I CAN'T BELIEVE I'M EVEN *THINKING* THAT SHARON MIGHT BE RIGHT.
THAT I MIGHT HAVE TO--
NO.
THERE HAS TO BE ANOTHER WAY OUT...HE'S STILL--
HEY, YOU'RE NOT GONNA *JUMP OFF* HERE, ARE YA?


'CAUSE IT TOOK ME HALF THE NIGHT TO FIND YOU...
...AN' I PRACTICALLY HAD TO TALK TO EVERY PIGEON IN NEW YORK STATE TO DO IT, MAN.
FALCON?
YEP...GOT A CALL FROM NICK FURY, SAID YOU MIGHT NEED A *FRIEND.*
YEAH... YEAH, I REALLY DO, SAM.
To Be Continued...


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13
BRUBAKER
EPTING
LARK
D'ARMATA
CAPTAIN AMERICA
THE WINTER SOLDIER
PART 5
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During the dark days of the early 1940s, a covert military experiment turned Steve Rogers into America's first Super-Soldier, CAPTAIN AMERICA.

Throughout the war, Cap and his partner Bucky fought alongside our infantry and with a group of heroes known as the Invaders. In the closing months of WWII, Captain America and Bucky were both presumed dead in an explosion over the English Channel.

Decades later, a figure was found trapped in ice, and Captain America was revived. Having slept through more than half of the 20th century, Steve Rogers awakened to a world he never imagined, a world where war had moved from the battlefield to the city streets...a world in dire need of...

CAPTAIN AMERICA

THE WINTER SOLDIER Part 5



Captain America's life has become a living nightmare, starting with the murder of the Red Skull and the theft of the Cosmic Cube, and escalating when General Aleksander Lukin--the man responsible for the Skull's death--set off a WMD on American soil to recharge the Cube. Lukin's main operative is the Winter Soldier, a legendary Cold War assassin who a secret KGB dossier has revealed is actually Cap's old partner, Bucky Barnes.

The question is what to do about it? Sharon Carter, S.H.I.E.L.D. Agent 13, believes the Winter Soldier should be taken down with extreme prejudice, that he's not Bucky anymore, just a weapon the enemy is using against them. But Cap believes that somewhere inside this brainwashed ex-Soviet operative is whatever is left of Bucky Barnes' humanity, and he can't accept the fact that, if there's no other way to stop him, he may have to kill the man who was once his best friend. And that's when another close friend and one-time partner, the Falcon, shows up...

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Brooklyn-- The Secret Home of Steve Rogers
JOIN THE ARMY
AND HERE I THOUGHT MY LIFE WAS COMPLICATED.
I MEAN, FURY GAVE A FEW DETAILS, BUT, DAMN...THAT'S A SERIOUS MIND-%#$ YOU'RE TALKIN' ABOUT, STEVE.
OH, BELIEVE ME, I KNOW.
AND YOU THINK THIS LUKIN GUY IS OUT FOR REVENGE ON YOU FROM BACK WHEN HE WAS A KID?
YET HE WAITS OVER TEN YEARS AFTER YOU COME OUT OF THE ICE TO MAKE A MOVE?
GOTTA BE SOMETHIN' ELSE GOIN' ON THERE...
UNLESS HE NEEDED THE CUBE FOR HIS PLAN TO WORK, SOMEHOW.
YEAH, THE COSMIC CUBE...REALLY HOPED I'D NEVER HAVE TO HEAR THOSE WORDS AGAIN.
YOU AND I ONLY MET BECAUSE OF THAT CUBE, SAM.
AND ONE OF THE MANY TIMES THE SKULL'S PLANS FOR IT WENT WRONG.
YOU EVER NOTICE HOW THAT WORKS? NO ONE'S EVER BEEN ABLE TO USE THAT DAMN THING AND HAVE IT TURN OUT THE WAY THEY WANT.
LIKE ALL THOSE BAD JOKES ABOUT THE GUY WHO FINDS THE MAGIC LANTERN.


IT DOES SEEM LIKE THAT... BUT WE CAN'T ASSUME IT'LL BE THAT WAY FOR LUKIN.
CONSIDERING HOW FLAWLESSLY HIS MOVES HAVE BEEN EXECUTED SO FAR...
HOW EASILY HE'S BEEN ABLE TO GET UNDER MY SKIN.
HE'S GOT ADVANTAGES THERE, STEVE...ONE IN PARTICULAR.
BUCKY...
YEP. GOT YOU THINKIN' YOU MIGHT HAVE TO PUT WHATEVER'S LEFT OF HIM OUT OF ITS MISERY. NO WAY THAT'S NOT GOING TO RIP YOU UP INSIDE...
...MAKE YOU QUESTION YOURSELF IN CIRCLES...
BUT THE ONLY QUESTION THAT REALLY MATTERS, STEVE, IS WHAT DO YOU WANT TO DO?
SAVE HIM... SOMEHOW.
GOOD. SO, HOW DO WE DO THAT?


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GOOD. SO, HOW DO WE DO THAT?



--YOU'RE NOT TO LET ANYONE ELSE HANDLE THE PACKAGE, DO YOU UNDERSTAND ME?
YES, SIR.
THAT'S THE MOST IMPORTANT DETAIL. THIS ISN'T LIKE THE LAST TIME YOU CARRIED IT.
NOW IT'S GOT POWER--REAL POWER.
YOU'RE TO KILL ANY MAN WHO EVEN ATTEMPTS TO TOUCH IT.
WHATEVER YOU SAY, SIR.
WAS THAT A TONE THERE...IN YOUR VOICE?
I GUESS SO, SIR. JUST SEEMS LIKE A WASTE TO ME.
WE WENT TO A LOT OF TROUBLE TO GET IT, AND NOW YOU JUST WANT TO BURY THE THING.



KEEPING SOMETHING THIS POWERFUL OUT OF THE HANDS OF MY ENEMIES IS A WAY OF CONTROLLING IT.
ANY REASONS BEYOND THAT ARE MY CONCERN, NOT YOURS.
OF COURSE, SIR.
THIS ISN'T THE FIRST TIME YOU'VE QUESTIONED MY ORDERS, SOLDIER.
SEE THAT IT'S THE LAST.
SIR, YES SIR.
SENDING THE CUBE AWAY, ALEKSANDER?
THAT'S A MISTAKE.
I'VE DONE WHAT I NEEDED WITH IT...
IT'S A BIG MISTAKE.
NO...
...THAT THING IS CURSED.


New York's Lower East Side-- Early the Next Morning
--TELLIN' YOU, FREIDMAN, GET OUTTA THERE.
YOU SO MUCH AS PUT A SCRATCH ON THAT PROTOTYPE AND YOU'RE GONNA HAVE THE LEADERS TO ANSWER TO.
OH, I'M REEAAAALLY SCARED NOW.
YOU SHOULD BE.
FACE IT, WE'RE A JOKE WITHOUT THE SKULL. WE EVEN HAVE A JOKE NAME...A.I.D.
SOUNDS REAL THREATENING...NOT.
GET OUT OF THE PROTOTYPE RIGHT NOW OR I SWEAR TO GOD, I'M GOING TO SHOOT YOU IN THE FACE, FREIDMAN.
ALL RIGHT. ALL RI--


STATUS?
ALL CLEAR.
ANY READINGS ON WHAT'S BEHIND THOSE DOORS?
CROSS-REFERENCING BUILDING SCHEMATICS WITH SATELLITE READINGS AS WE SPEAK.
IT'S NOT CROWDED YET, BUT NEARLY EVERY WARM BODY IN THE BUILDING IS MOVING IN OUR DIRECTION, FAST.
GOOD. ISOLATE THE ONES THAT AREN'T.
OUR GUYS'LL BE THE ONES RUNNING FOR THE EXITS.
...HUNH...?
HANG ON, STEVE...I'VE GOT THIS...

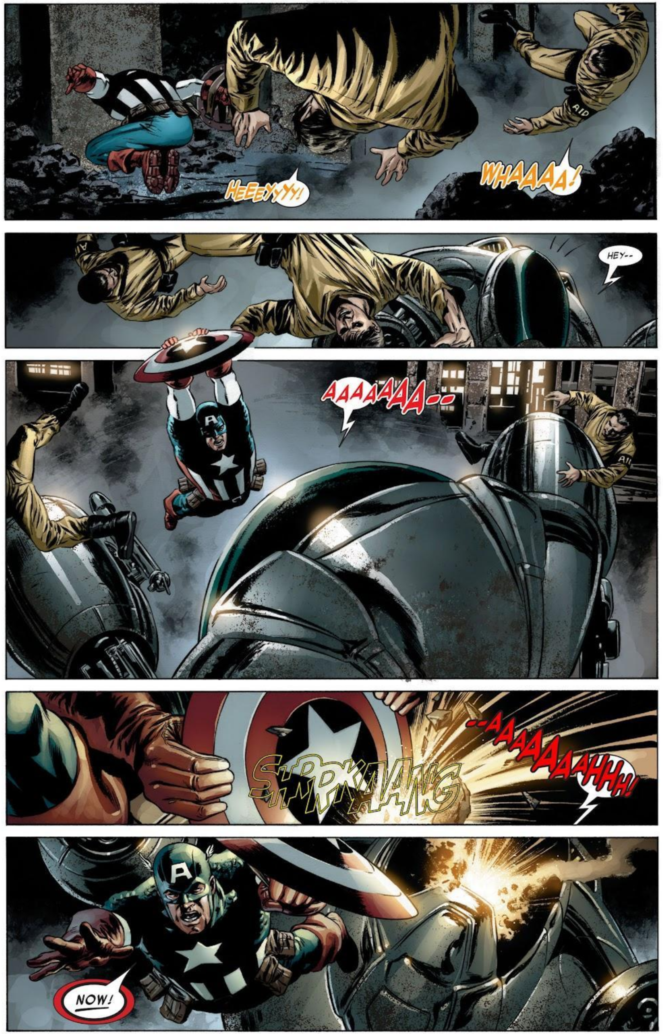

FALCON AND I'LL HANDLE THIS, IRON MAN.
YOU JUST CONCENTRATE ON FINDING OUR TARGETS.
I CAN DO BOTH, STEVE... EVER HEAR OF MULTI-TASKING?
LET'S NOT GET HUNG UP ON DETAILS...
...WE GOT WORK TO DO.
OHGODOHGODOHGOD!!
SHOOT TO KILL! KILL THEM!
SOMEONE GET THE PLASMA CANNON!
KLUNNCH


CAP, I'VE GOT A LOCK. THREE MEN, HEADING FOR THE ROOF.
ROOF ACCESS LEADS TO A BUILDING AROUND THE BLOCK THAT APPEARS TO HAVE SEVERAL HELICOPTERS IN THE LOADING BAY.
GO.
I'M GONE.
FZZZT

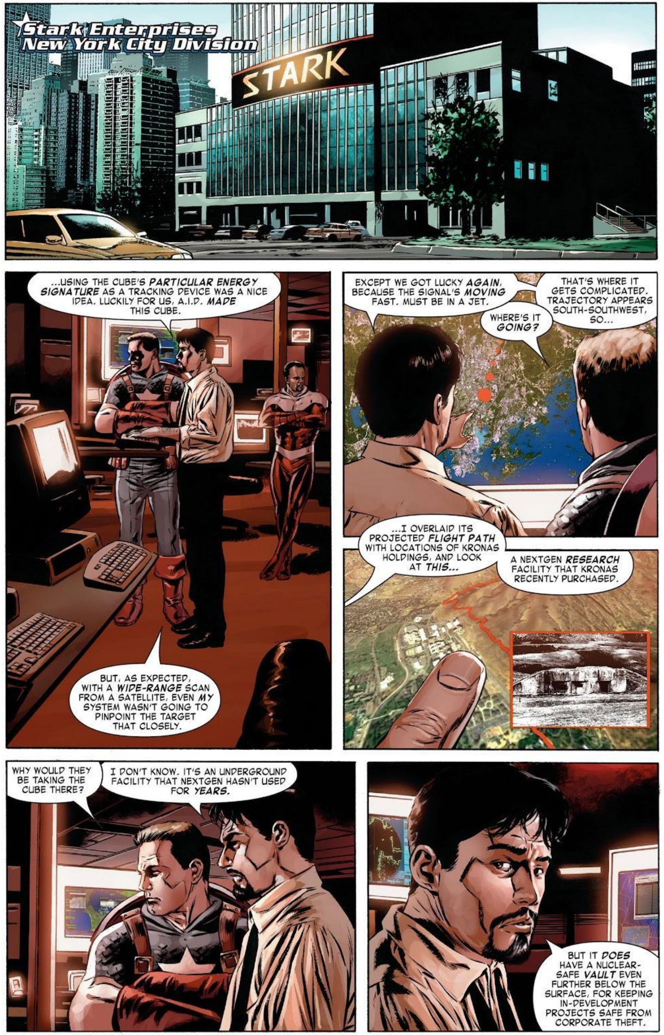

KLING
I KNEW THIS THING WOULD BE AWESOME...
NEXT!
BBZAATT
OOOFF!
UNH...


FALCON...GET TO THE ROOF! DON'T LET THEM GET AWAY!
I'M NOT LEAVING YOU ON YOUR OWN AGAINST THAT THING!
HE'S NOT ON HIS OWN.
HEY--
ALL RIGHT, THEN... I'M OUT.
KKKRAANG
AID


KRAKK
ZZUUNNG
DAMN IT!
CAP! HEADS UP!
YYYEEAAAAAHHH!
BBZAATT
HEY--


HEEEYYYY!
WHAAAA!
HEY--
AAAAAAA--
--AAAAAAAHHH!
NOW!


AAAAAAAAA--
--AAAAAAHHHH!
SHHRRAAAK
CLEARLY, THAT IS NOT A TOY, MORON.
OH GOD OH GOD OH GOD OH GOD...
NICE WORK...
...BUT CHECK THIS OUT... CAUGHT ME A CREEPY LITTLE MAD-SCIENTIST GUY.
WHAT-- WHAT DO YOU--
I--I'M NOT--NOT--
OH G-GOD... WHAT DO YOU WANT?
SIMPLE. I WANT YOU TO TELL ME HOW TO TRACK A COSMIC CUBE.

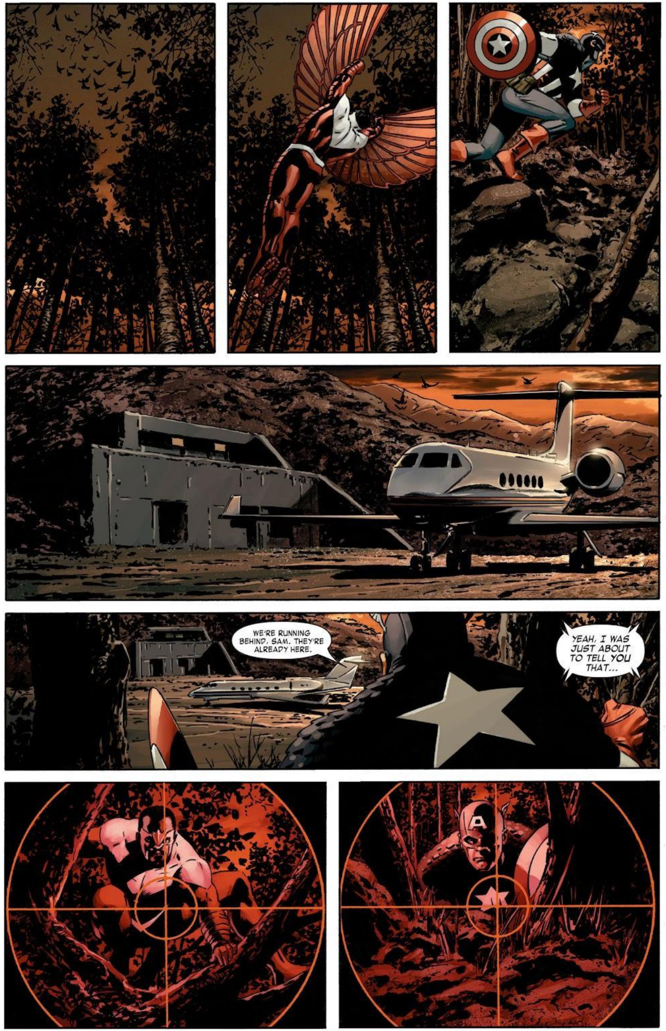

Stark Enterprises
New York City Division
STARK
...USING THE CUBE'S PARTICULAR ENERGY SIGNATURE AS A TRACKING DEVICE WAS A NICE IDEA. LUCKILY FOR US, A.I.D. MADE THIS CUBE.
BUT, AS EXPECTED, WITH A WIDE-RANGE SCAN FROM A SATELLITE, EVEN MY SYSTEM WASN'T GOING TO PINPOINT THE TARGET THAT CLOSELY.
EXCEPT WE GOT LUCKY AGAIN, BECAUSE THE SIGNAL'S MOVING FAST. MUST BE IN A JET.
WHERE'S IT GOING?
THAT'S WHERE IT GETS COMPLICATED. TRAJECTORY APPEARS SOUTH-SOUTHWEST, SO...
...I OVERLAID ITS PROJECTED FLIGHT PATH WITH LOCATIONS OF KRONAS HOLDINGS, AND LOOK AT THIS...
A NEXTGEN RESEARCH FACILITY THAT KRONAS RECENTLY PURCHASED.
WHY WOULD THEY BE TAKING THE CUBE THERE?
I DON'T KNOW. IT'S AN UNDERGROUND FACILITY THAT NEXTGEN HASN'T USED FOR YEARS.
BUT IT DOES HAVE A NUCLEAR-SAFE VAULT EVEN FURTHER BELOW THE SURFACE, FOR KEEPING IN-DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS SAFE FROM CORPORATE THEFT.

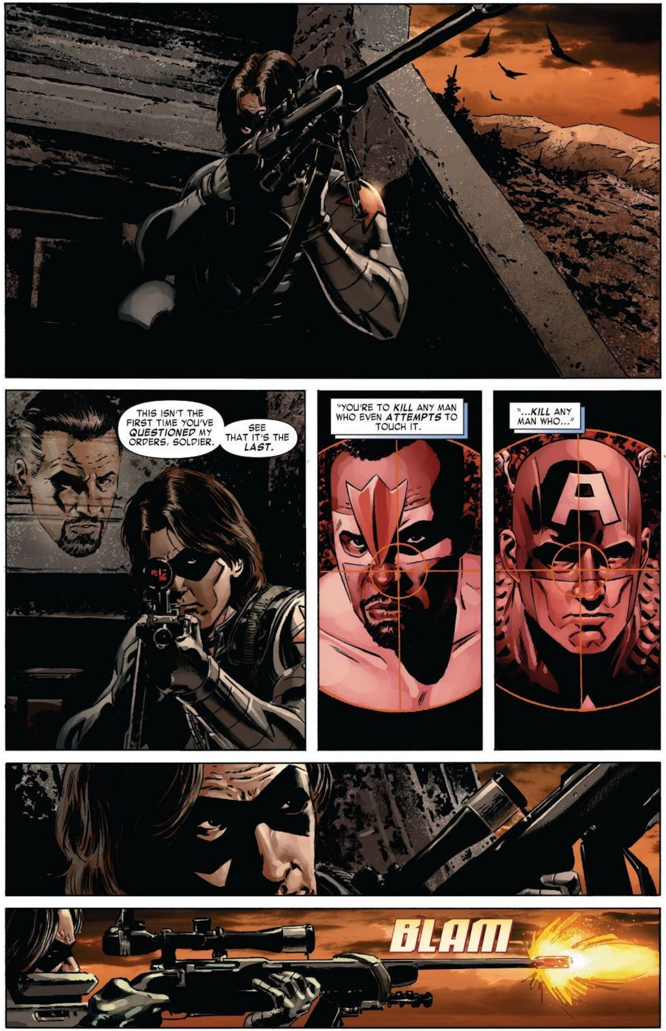

SO, FOR SOME REASON, THE PSYCHOTIC EX-SOVIET GENERAL IS TAKING THE COSMIC CUBE TO A FALLOUT SHELTER?
THIS SOUND LIKE TROUBLE TO ANYONE BUT ME?
YEAH. WE'VE GOT TO GO.
UH...
WHAT?
I SAID, THIS IS WHERE IT GOT COMPLICATED, AND IT DOES, BECAUSE I CAN'T GO WITH YOU.
I BARELY FOUGHT OFF A TAKEOVER FROM KRONAS LAST MONTH.
HAD TO PERSONALLY CONVINCE HALF THE BOARD TO VOTE AGAINST IT, THE MONEY WAS SO GOOD.
AND AFTER THE HIT OUR STOCK TOOK WHEN THE AVENGERS IMPLODED, IF IRON MAN IS PART OF A RAID ON A KRONAS FACILITY--
YOU COULD LOSE YOUR COMPANY?
TO PUT IT BLUNTLY-- YES.
THE BOARD WOULD SEE IT AS CORPORATE WARFARE AND TURN ON ME.
OKAY, TONY... YOU SIT THIS ONE OUT.


BAD MOVE, STEVE...SERIOUSLY BAD MOVE.
STARK
FLYING HEAD-ON AT THE COSMIC CUBE, COULD'VE REALLY USED IRON MAN FOR BACKUP.
AND LET HIM LOSE EVERYTHING HE'S SPENT HIS LIFE BUILDING? NO... TONY'S DOING IMPORTANT WORK, FOR THE FUTURE.
WON'T BE MUCH FUTURE IF THIS LUKIN GUY GOES BIBLICAL WITH THE CUBE.
WE'LL TAKE CARE OF IT.
WE'RE GOOD, SURE... BUT WE'VE GOT NO IDEA WHAT WE'RE--
B-DEET-DEET!
HANG ON.
AM I CRAZY, OR DID YOU AND YOUR FRIENDS TAKE OUT AN A.I.D. WAREHOUSE THIS MORNING?
I WAS JUST ABOUT TO CALL YOU ABOUT THAT, SHARON.
HOW DID YOU EVEN FIND THEM?
WASN'T HARD. TONY STARK JUST USED A FEW OF HIS SLEAZIER BUSINESS CONNECTIONS.
AND I'M ASSUMING THERE WAS A PURPOSE TO THIS?
STANDS TO REASON WHEREVER THE CUBE IS, LUKIN WILL HAVE IT UNDER GUARD BY HIS BEST PEOPLE...
...AND THAT'LL INCLUDE THE WINTER SOLDIER.
SO, I NEEDED SOMEONE TO TELL ME HOW TO FIND THE CUBE.


THEY KNEW HOW? THEN WHY NOT JUST STEAL IT BACK?
BECAUSE THEY KNOW WHAT IT IS, TOO, SO THEY AREN'T IN ANY RUSH TO ANGER ITS OWNER.
SO WHAT DID YOU FIND OUT?
THAT LUKIN IS TAKING THE CUBE TO AN UNDERGROUND RESEARCH FACILITY IN THE MOUNTAINS OF WEST VIRGINIA.
I JUST SENT YOU EVERYTHING WE'VE GOT. SAM AND I ARE PRESENTLY EN ROUTE.
I DON'T KNOW WHAT THEY'RE UP TO, BUT WE'VE GOT TO STOP THEM BEFORE THEY ACCESS THE DEEP-STORAGE VAULT.
STARK
YOU'RE ALREADY--? YOU SHOULD'VE CALLED ME SOONER.
SO FURY CAN GET TIED UP IN RED TAPE AGAIN? NO THANKS.
JUST CONSIDER THIS A RELIABLE TIP THAT THERE'S A WEAPON OF MASS DESTRUCTION AT THE COORDINATES I JUST SENT YOU.
ROGERS OUT.
DAMN IT...
THIS IS AGENT 13. I NEED A STRIKE TEAM READY... NOW.

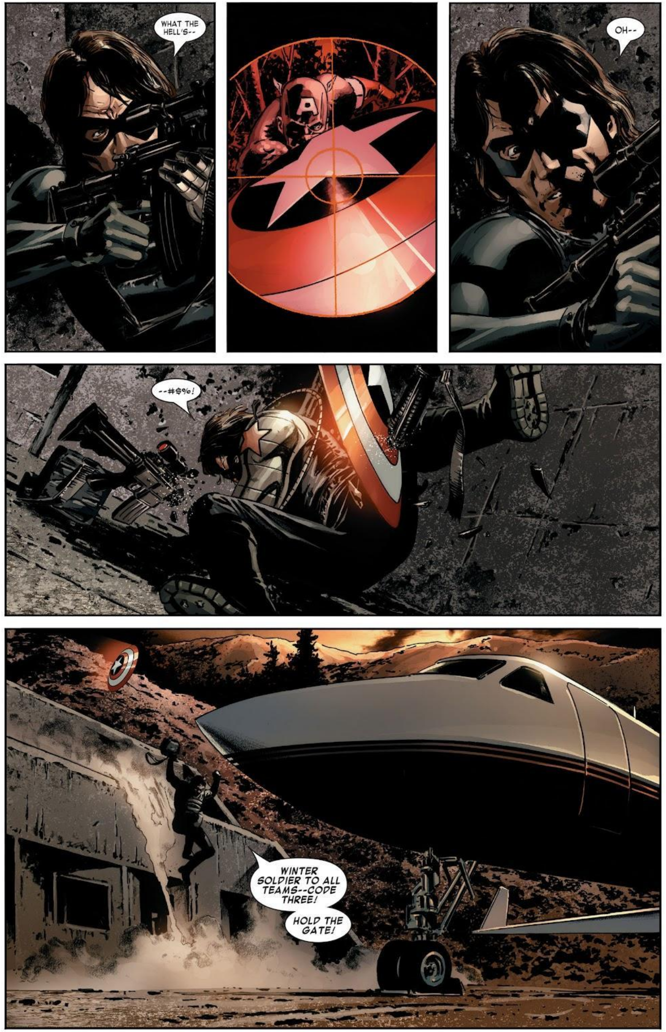

Allegheny Mountains, West Virginia
--CLOSE AS WE'RE GONNA GET WITHOUT BEING SEEN.
MAN, SHARON SOUNDED LIKE A REAL HARD#*$ THERE...
WHATEVER HAPPENED TO THE OLD HAPPY-GO-LUCKY SHARON?
HER LAST BOYFRIEND WAS KILLED IN THE PHILADELPHIA BOMBING.
OH.
AND SHE WAS NEVER THAT HAPPY-GO-LUCKY.
BUT SHE DID USED TO SMILE MORE OFTEN...
SO, WE GOT A PLAN, OR ARE WE JUST RUSHIN' IN BLIND?
WE'RE NOT RUSHING IN BLIND, THAT'S FOR SURE.


WE'RE RUNNING BEHIND, SAM. THEY'RE ALREADY HERE.
YEAH, I WAS JUST ABOUT TO TELL YOU THAT...


THIS ISN'T THE FIRST TIME YOU'VE *QUESTIONED* MY ORDERS, SOLDIER.
SEE THAT IT'S THE *LAST*.
"YOU'RE TO *KILL* ANY MAN WHO EVEN *ATTEMPTS* TO TOUCH IT.
"...*KILL* ANY MAN WHO..."
BLAM


NO. 14
CAPTAIN AMERICA
COMICS
MARVEL
RUSSIAN TANK CORPS
TO BERLIN
BRUBAKER
EPTING
D'ARMATA
WWW.MARVEL.COM


BLAM
NO WAY DID I MISS...


WHAT THE HELL'S--
OH--
--#$%!
WINTER SOLDIER TO ALL TEAMS--CODE THREE!
HOLD THE GATE!

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CAPTAIN AMERICA

THE WINTER SOLDIER conclusion



Captain America's life has become a living nightmare, starting with the murder of the Red Skull and the theft of the Cosmic Cube, and escalating when General Aleksander Lukin--the man responsible for the Skull's death--set off a WMD on American soil to recharge the Cube. Lukin's main operative is the Winter Soldier, a legendary Cold War assassin, who a secret KGB dossier revealed is actually Cap's old partner, Bucky Barnes.

After nearly killing his closest friend, General Lukin sent the Cosmic Cube away, fearing that its power came at too high a price. With the help of his friends, Iron Man and the Falcon, Cap managed to track the Cube to a remote facility in the mountains of West Virginia, hoping that the Winter Soldier would be guarding it. Cap is determined to save his old friend from something he knows Bucky would consider a fate worse than death.

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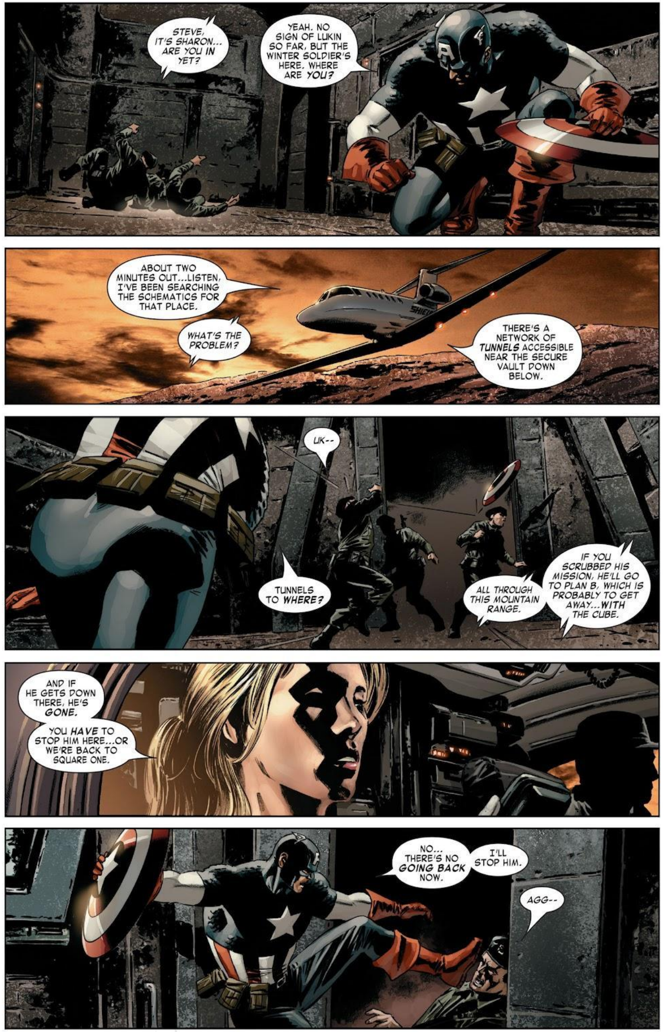
Captain America created by Joe Simon & Jack Kirby

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DIRECT *HIT*, CAP, BUT HE'S ON THE MOVE ALREADY.
THIS GUY IS GOOD.
I KNOW... BELIEVE ME.
AND HE'S GOT PLENTY OF BACKUP.
THERE'S NO *TIME* FOR THIS, SAM. I'M GOING RIGHT THROUGH THEM...
DO WHAT YOU *CAN* TO PROTECT MY BACK.
RIGHT THROUGH...?
BLAM
KRAK
BLAM
KRAK


UHH--
AK!
KRAK
KRAK
KNNK
ALL RIGHT, BOYS...LET'S SEE HOW GOOD YOU ARE WHEN IT *COUNTS*...


STEVE, IT'S SHARON... ARE YOU IN YET?
YEAH. NO SIGN OF LUKIN SO FAR, BUT THE WINTER SOLDIER'S HERE. WHERE ARE YOU?
ABOUT TWO MINUTES OUT...LISTEN, I'VE BEEN SEARCHING THE SCHEMATICS FOR THAT PLACE.
WHAT'S THE PROBLEM?
THERE'S A NETWORK OF TUNNELS ACCESSIBLE NEAR THE SECURE VAULT DOWN BELOW.
UK--
TUNNELS TO WHERE?
ALL THROUGH THIS MOUNTAIN RANGE.
IF YOU SCRUBBED HIS MISSION, HE'LL GO TO PLAN B, WHICH IS PROBABLY TO GET AWAY...WITH THE CUBE.
AND IF HE GETS DOWN THERE, HE'S GONE.
YOU HAVE TO STOP HIM HERE...OR WE'RE BACK TO SQUARE ONE.
NO... THERE'S NO GOING BACK NOW.
I'LL STOP HIM.
AGG--


NO, YOU WON'T.
KNNK
UNNH!
YOU'RE SOMETHING ELSE... I'LL GIVE YOU THAT.
BUT NO ONE STOPS ME.
YEAH, WELL... SOMEONE HAS TO.
AND I CAN'T FAIL YOU AGAIN...
KLNNG!


SMAK
EX-SPETSNAZ?
YOU GUYS AIN'T %#$!
GET HIM! TAKE HIM DOWN!
AW, DAMN...
RATATATATATAT
SECURE THAT ENTRANCE, AND I WANT THREE OF YOU RUNNING A SWEEP INSIDE--NOW!
YES, MA'AM.

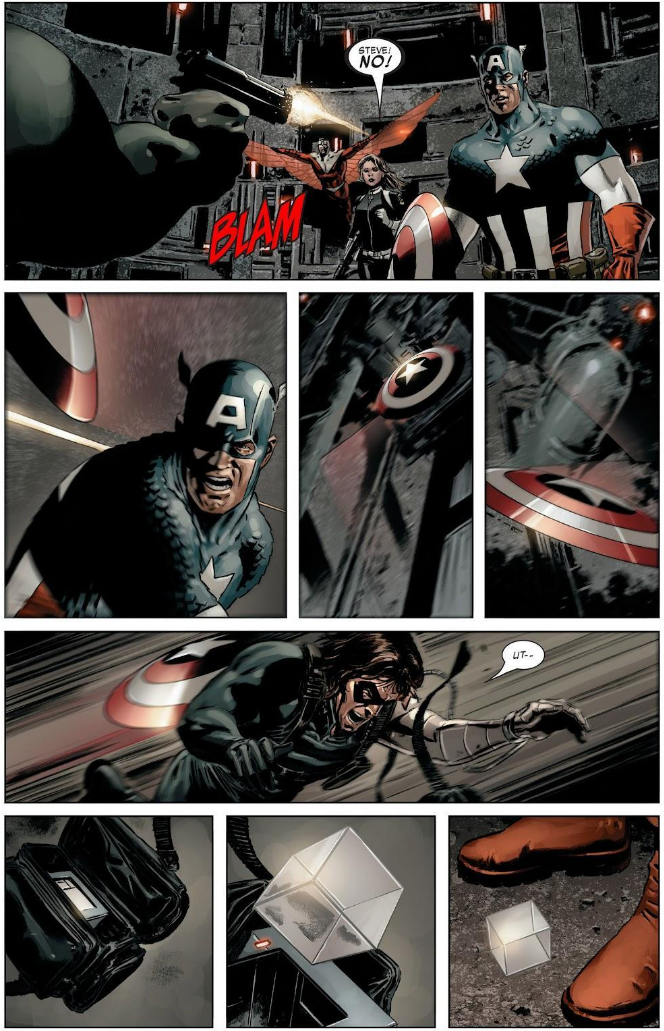

WELL, LOOK WHO THE CAVALRY IS...
SAM. IT'S BEEN A WHILE.
TOO LONG.
WISH WE HAD TIME TO CATCH UP, BUT...
I KNOW... I'LL SCOUT AHEAD.
HE CAN'T DO THIS ALONE, SAM...
WE'VE GOT TO FIND HIM.
UNH!
WNK
UPPT--


THIS IS POINTLESS... I'M TELLING YOU RIGHT NOW, BUCK...
...YOU'RE NOT MAKING IT TO THAT ELEVATOR.
I THINK YOU'VE GOT ME CONFUSED...WITH SOMEBODY...
...WHO GIVES A DAMN WHAT YOU THINK!
KTTSSH
KA-RAKK


YOU'RE STILL HERE? THAT PUNCH SHOULD'VE PUT YOU DOWN FOR GOOD.
SMAK
...TRIED TO KILL ME...
IS THIS REALLY ALL YOU ARE NOW?
IS THERE NO PART OF YOU THAT KNOWS WHAT YOU USED TO BE?
SHUT UP!
YOU WERE BETTER THAN THIS!
SHUT UP!
YOU DON'T KNOW ME!
KSSSHH


AND YOU DON'T KNOW HOW MUCH I WISH THAT WAS TRUE...
POOM
YOU'RE WRONG, BUT THANKS FOR THE TOSS...
PSSSHHH
...THIS IS JUST WHERE I WANTED TO BE.
REMEMBER!
REMEMBER WHO YOU REALLY ARE!


YOU WERE SUPPOSED TO BE TOUGH, BUT THIS IS...WEAK!
REMEMBER WHO I AM?!
THE ONLY THING I AM--
SECURE VAULT ACCESS
--IS THE MAN WHO'S GONNA KILL YOU!
FINE...
...THEN GO AHEAD.
SHOOT ME.
IF YOU TRULY DON'T KNOW ME...
...THEN JUST DO IT.


STEVE! NO!
BLAM
UT--

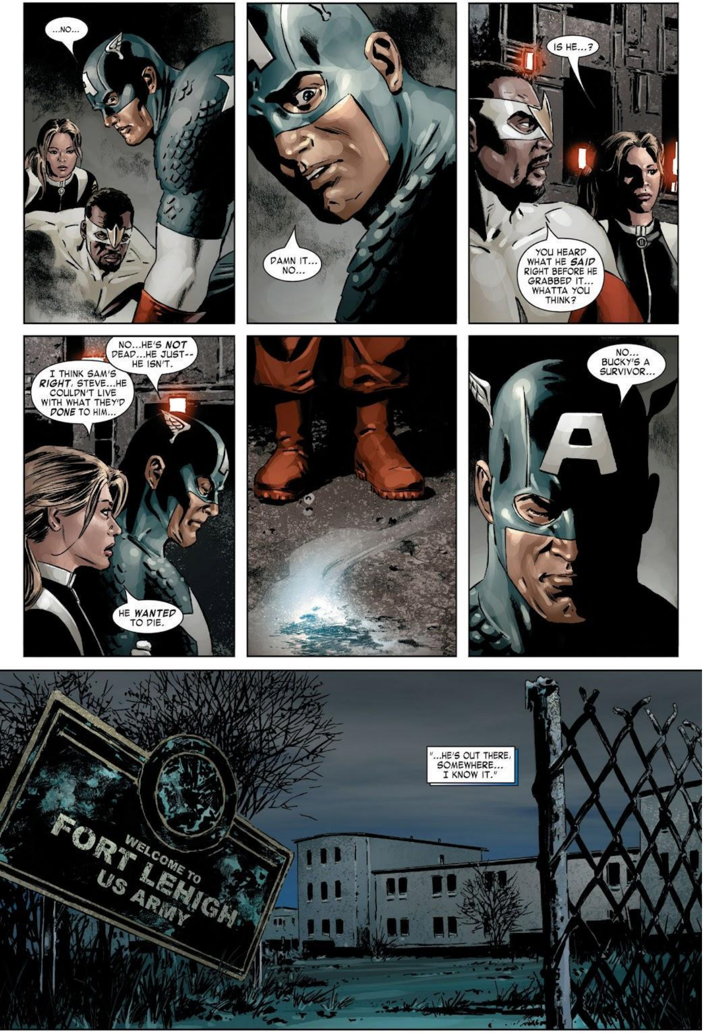

DODGED MY--HEY! NO!
REMEMBER WHO YOU ARE.
HOLD YOUR FIRE, SHARON.
HE JUST TRIED TO SHOOT YOU, STEVE.
AAAIIIEEEE--
JUST TRUST ME...IT'S OKAY...



LOOK OUT! INCOMING!
DROP OFF, BUCKY! LET GO!
I CAN'T! I'M STUCK...
WELCOME TO
FORT LEHIGH
US ARMY
<YOU ARE MY FINEST CREATION, MY TWISTED JOKE ON THE AMERICANS...>
<LET US DRINK TO THEIR DEMISE.>

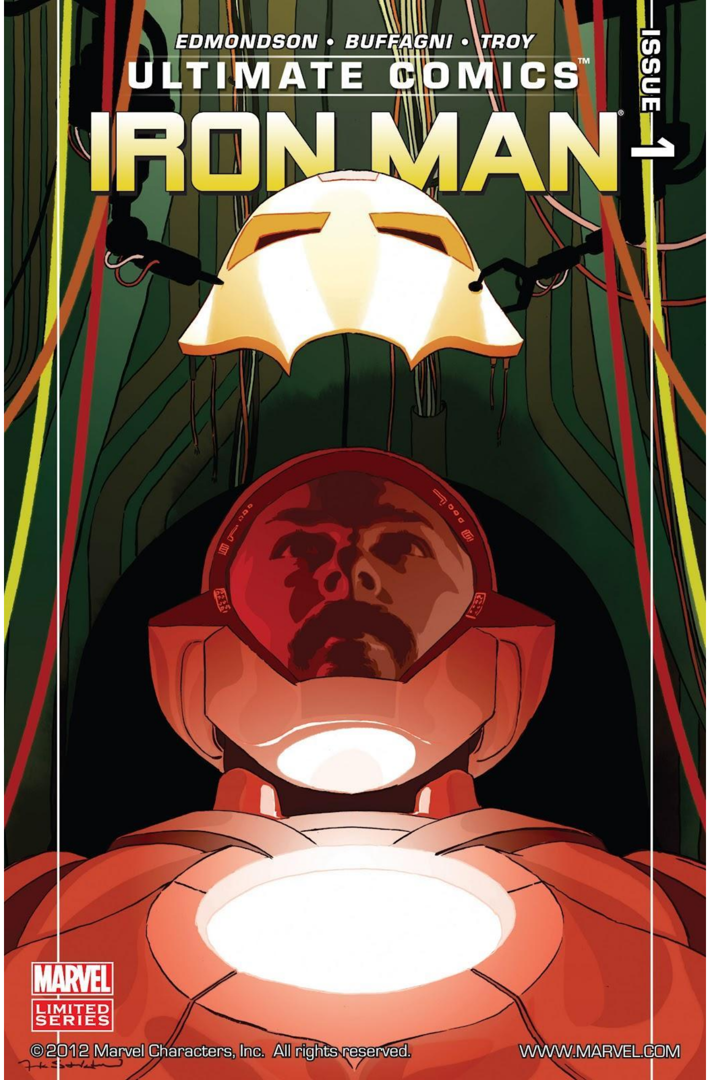

...NO... NO...
IT'S OKAY, BUCK...IT'S GOING TO BE OKAY...
STEVE... STEP AWAY FROM HIM!
SHARON... IT'S OVER. LET IT GO.
THIS ISN'T THE MAN WHO KILLED YOUR FRIEND.
NOT ANYMORE.
CAP...?
WHAT-- WHAT'D YOU DO...?
HOW CAN I...? NO...YOU SHOULD'VE JUST...
...KILLED ME.
WHAT?


THIS THING-- THIS DAMN THING!
HEY!
ALL THOSE INNOCENT PEOPLE, DEAD-- FOR THIS!
NOOOO!


...NO...
DAMN IT... NO...
IS HE...?
YOU HEARD WHAT HE SAID RIGHT BEFORE HE GRABBED IT... WHATTA YOU THINK?
I THINK SAM'S RIGHT, STEVE...HE COULDN'T LIVE WITH WHAT THEY'D DONE TO HIM...
NO...HE'S NOT DEAD...HE JUST--HE ISN'T.
HE WANTED TO DIE.
NO... BUCKY'S A SURVIVOR...
"...HE'S OUT THERE, SOMEWHERE... I KNOW IT."
WELCOME TO
FORT LEHIGH
US ARMY


PRIVATE BARNES... YOU STAND AT ATTENTION WHEN IN THE PRESENCE OF OFFICERS!
SIR, YES SIR!
THAT'S MORE LIKE IT... NOW I'VE BROUGHT SOMEONE I WANT YOU TO MEET...
THIS IS CORPORAL STEVE ROGERS, ALSO KNOWN AS CAPTAIN AMERICA...
...IF YOU CAN PASS MUSTER, YOU'RE GOING TO BE HIS PARTNER.
"YOU'RE A FOOL..."


...I TOLD YOU IT WAS A MISTAKE TO SEND THE CUBE AWAY, ALEKSANDER.
AND NOW YOU'VE LOST IT.
I'M NOT CONCERNED... IT'S JUST AS WELL IT'S BEEN DESTROYED, IF YOU ASK ME.
IT'S ONE OF THE MOST POWERFUL OBJECTS IN THE UNIVERSE, AND YOU SIMPLY THROW IT AWAY...BECAUSE YOU HURT YOUR FRIEND? SUCH A WEAKLING.
YOU COULD HAVE RESTORED HIM TO FULL HEALTH WITH JUST A THOUGHT...
AND BROUGHT BACK YOUR PRECIOUS SOCIALIST REPUBLIC WITH NOT MUCH MORE EFFORT.
NO. I'VE LEARNED SOMETHING YOU NEVER COULD...THAT NOTHING YOU WISH FOR WITH THAT THING GOES WELL.
THAT CUBE IS CURSED...LOOK WHAT IT'S DONE TO ME, AFTER ALL...
...PUTTING A CREATURE LIKE YOU INSIDE MY MIND.
AND IF IT'D HAD MORE POWER THAT NIGHT, I'D BE THE ONLY ONE HERE, ALEKSANDER...
YOU GOT LUCKY.
OR WE BOTH GOT CURSED...TRAPPED TOGETHER...
...LIKE RATS IN A CAGE.
YES... FOR NOW...
The End


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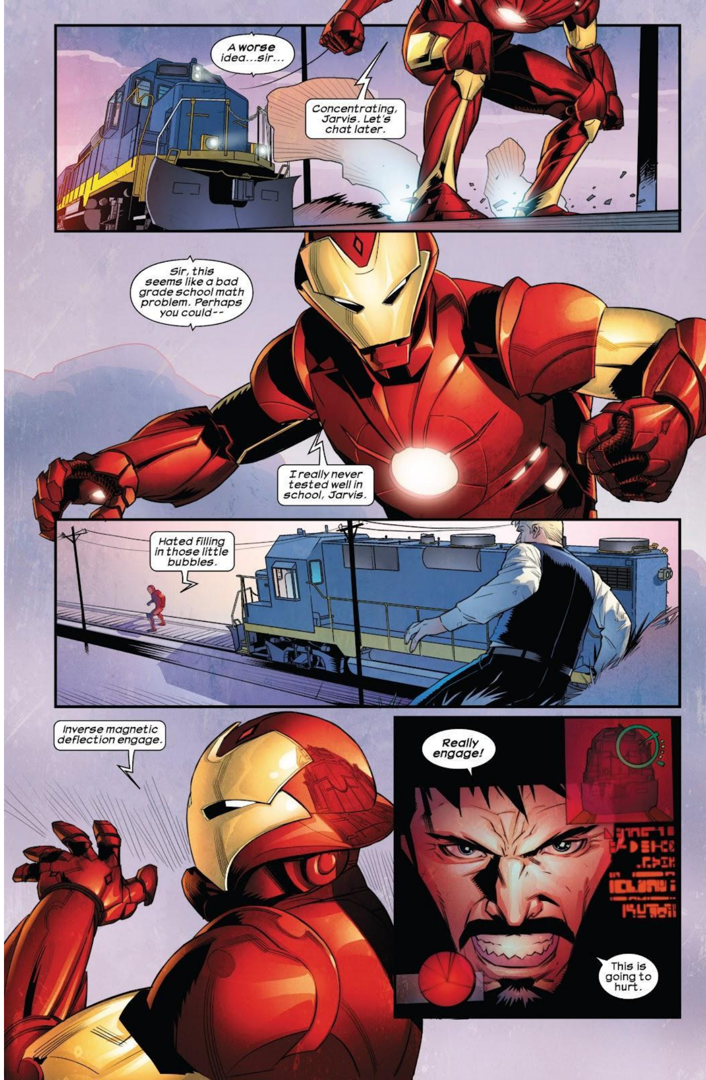
NEAR TORONTO, CANADA.
This is Engine 42, base, do you read? I need police assistance.
I have a helicopter lowering down over my cargo... is anyone reading me?
Okay, men, be quick about it. Precious cargo is in cars six and seven.
We've only been ordered to take the weapons tank, so secure and contain those cars.
Roger. B-team, you have go on explosives in 3...2...1--
KABAM!



How much longer?
Thirty seconds!
A lot of firepower here, boss!
It'll do the job. Make sure we get each last--
FWOOSH
What was that?
Just hurry up and get them all loaded--



THUNK
Jarvis, inform the Canadian Guard or whatever they're called, that I'm here.
I'll let them know.
You know how they get about their airspace.
But I did have a train to catch.
Now to slow it down...
SCREEEEEE
Hm.
Not working?
Nope. Big girl doesn't want to follow my lead. Time for a new idea.
Pal, you sit tight and let me have a turn with her.
Better idea?
I didn't say a better idea, Jarvis. I said a new idea.



A worse idea...sir...
Concentrating, Jarvis. Let's chat later.
Sir, this seems like a bad grade school math problem. Perhaps you could--
I really never tested well in school, Jarvis.
Hated filling in those little bubbles.
Inverse magnetic deflection engage.
Really engage!
This is going to hurt.


ULTIMATE COMICS IRON MAN
DEMON IN THE ARMOR
PART 1 OF 4
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Let's fly out of here! We don't need Iron Man on our ass.
You think he could have survived--
Son of a--
THUNK!
You all may want to hold on...
...this thing will probably fall fast if the prop stops.
AHH!
Yep, pretty fast.
But, here...
...this will keep you afloat until the authorities find you.
"Tony, you're going to hurt yourself..."


BACK THEN.
...You don't know anything about fiber-optic routing. It's time to admit it.
You don't have a monopoly on the fun fixes around here, darling.
Plus, if I break it, I'll buy us a new one.
FWOOM
-cough- I -cough- will buy us a new one.
You should have let me fix it, Tony. I don't like using Stark money to build our company.
Your dad's money comes with a leash, you know this.
All the more reason to get some investors on board.
Speaking of...we need to get dressed. They'll be here in under an hour.
Ugh. Suits. Why can't we start a company on a Caribbean island? Flip-flops and bikinis...
Don't be worried, Josie, my love. Flash your smile, show a little leg, wow them with your brilliance and we'll have our first major investor.
So it's all up to me, is it? I think--
BEEP BEEP!
Tony...
Yeah. Damn it.


Dad. What brings you to the slums?
Something you can perhaps explain. Apparently you told your driver not to bother picking you up.
Not unless he wants to take me to grab a pizza.
You're going to the ceremony tonight. You will honor your father, and you will give the shareholders faith--as misguided as it might be--in the next CEO of Stark Enterprises.
Dad, I have my own company to run. So, with all due respect, no thanks.
Get in. Now.
I will not ask a third time, Anthony. I will, however, see this little hobby go bankrupt.
It is time for you to put away childish things, son. This isn't about work, it's about legacy, family, and your responsibility as a son.
Josey, it's not worth the fight...I'll...I'll be back...
Sure you will...
Another girlfriend, Pops? How do you keep track of their names?
Put this on.

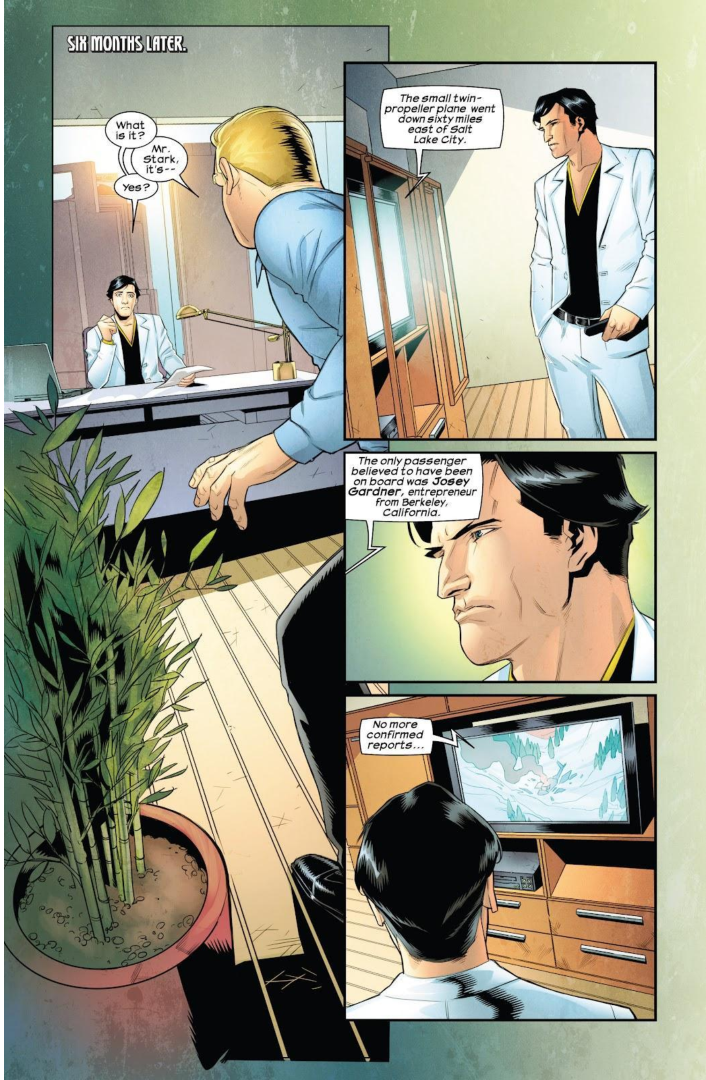

TODAY.
STARK INDUSTRIES ANNUAL STOCKHOLDER SUMMIT.
Welcome, Mr. Stark.
"My father, Howard Stark, started a company forty years ago, a company that he left in *my* trust.
"He did not leave this company to me to preserve its past...


...but to *forge* its *future*.
Fellow shareholders, this has been a black banner year for the nation, for the planet.
But we have risen from the *wreckage* of tribulation with our hands on our *bootstraps* and we are pleased to announce...
...profits have, just this month, reached a *five-year high!*
"Stark Industries corrupts the world, Mr. Atchison."
Stark is a *contagion* on the global economy, but it also holds the cure:
Free energy, Mr. Atchison.
I've told you, Mr. Li, I don't have access...I work in the Endotherm technologies division.
Arc technology is a totally different--
You misunderstand me, David.
I don't need you to do anything but open the door. Then we will liberate this technology.
Much like Robin Hood.
Robin Hood lived in a forest, this is Stark security.
I could get in a lot of trouble and I'm not sure it's worth the risk.
Three million then. All you have to do is plug this in...


"...and then leave the rest to us."
--Next item: Air Force would like you to personally supervise a test of your new F-22 targeting interface.
Pass, Jarvis.
Accounting advises selling off some dead weight: non-producing or idle holdings: some worthless real estate.
Which real estate holdings--?
BEEP BEEP!
Ms. Danvers on the line, sir.
Tony, you've been avoiding me.
Madame Chief of Staff of--what are you running these days, Carol?
...and do I call you Madame?
Tony, stop playing with your coin and pay attention to me.
You let a train... hit you?
Wait, Carol.
Are you upset about me, or about the Canadian train I broke?
You know me, I couldn't fly past a weapons heist without joining in on the fun.


I'm talking about a valuable national asset being treated like a plaything.
Again, Carol, me or the suit?
Maybe that's a question you should ask yourself, Tony.
Thanks for your concern, lovey. Going into a tunnel...
BOOP
It's Ms. Danvers' birthday today.
Ah.
Send her something. Flowers. No, something nicer. For her neckline. A ruby, maybe. Goes with her lips.
Back to the holdings sales--find out if they intend to sell off JT Technologies.
Okay. What is it?
Nothing. Just has some historical value.


THEN.
You're going to keep the name?
I can't change it now. We have--*I* have three investors--I change the name, they'll think we're unstable.
JT Technologies stays.
Why don't you take a job with--
Don't. Don't make *your* dream *mine*. Do what you must, run your dad's company, Tony, but I'm going to build this thing. *Bootstraps* and all that.
Boot-straps and all that.
I've never known anyone like you, Josey.
And I believe in what we're building--
You're not building anything anymore, Tony.
Now you're playing with the toys your daddy gives you.
Goodbye, Tony.
And I've never known anyone like you, either.
"Mr. Stark?"


SIX MONTHS LATER.
What is it?
Mr. Stark, it's--
Yes?
The small twin-propeller plane went down sixty miles east of Salt Lake City.
The only passenger believed to have been on board was **Josey Gardner**, *entrepreneur from Berkeley, California.*
No more confirmed reports...


Unh!
BANG
Don't be a blunt instrument, Tony.
Be precise with your emotions. Channel them. Direct them.
At whom should I direct my feelings, exactly?
It was you who chased her out of my life.
She and I would have been--
Save it son. You have to focus on your future. Regret makes you weak, depending on others breeds stagnancy.
Time to bring you in on a new project: Nanotech. Take a look at these projections.
Today? You want to talk about this-- this thing today--
The progress of technology will not wait for you to get over ex-girlfriends. Nor will the enemies of our nation.
BEEP BEEP BEEP BEEP


NOW.
Mr. Stark, we have a security breach that needs your immediate attention. Endotherm division.
SECURITY BREACH ENDOTHERM TECH DIVISION.
BEEP BEEP BEEP BEEP
Thank you for a lovely evening, my dear. I'm afraid I have to run...
"...time to get dressed."
What do we have?
Not clear yet, Mister Stark. Physical breach at three points of entry, but local security measures have been disabled somehow--
INDUSTRIES ENDOTHERM
STARK
No one can disable my--
KAABOOM!


Jarvis, I have an unidentified drone overhead.
Jarvis, you awake?
Just connected, sir.
Engaging robust wireless interface. I'm going to need data decrypting.
Copy.
You need control trace?
Exactly.
...I'm reading a bounce location, something mobile. **Armored truck** four miles from you.
Put it on the HUD. They won't get to five miles.


"I have a visual on the armored truck.
"Going to open it up like a tin can and see what spills.
"I hope they're watching their toes."
EXIT 22
GMC
This...is your exit.
BLAM
What the hell?
Sir, we have a new alert. This attack--I think it was to cover a network breach. I'm reading firewall infiltration markers here...
What data are they accessing?


They used Endotherm to hack into the archives, sir.
I have a dozen archive files with trip sensors activated. A dozen and climbing. They're siphoning out the system...
Activated?
They have access to everything. We don't know yet what specifically... security measures are running.
Hold on.
Looks like you dropped a call.
...backtrace... dial...
Who is this?
Who is this?
It's Publishers Clearing House. Now who the--
EEEEEEEEE!
It's you...I see.
Your company belongs to the Mandarin, young Stark.
AUGH!
Armor hacking in progress. Defense protocols overrided.
I'm sorry to have to take away your little toys.
CLICK


Unnh!
Jarvis, can you hear me?
--ot--ery clear--
My armor is self-destructing. Shut them down!
While I--figure out--what the hell the--bzzz--Mandarin is...
...and where they...got their tech!
Self-destruction initiated: countdown in 10, 9, 8....
BZZZZZT
To Be Continued...

NEXT ISSUE:



ON SALE NOW!



ULTIMATE COMICS ULTIMATES #17

ULTIMATE COMICS SPIDER-MAN #16



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IRON MAN
ISSUE 2
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LIKE ANY BILLIONAIRE WITH A GENIUS IQ, TONY STARK HAS IT ALL: FAST CARS, A THRIVING COMPANY, AND A STEADY STREAM OF AVAILABLE WOMEN. BUT HE HAS ONE THING THAT NO ONE ELSE DOES: THE WORLD'S MOST POWERFUL SUIT OF ARMOR. WITH HIS BRAINS, HIS MONEY, AND HIS ARMOR, STARK PROTECTS THE WORLD AS. . .

IRON MAN



PREVIOUSLY . . .

Before he was Iron Man, before he was CEO of Stark Industries, Tony Stark was a young man living under the shadow of his father. In response to his father's pressure, Tony took over the family business and threw himself into his inventions.

But those inventions, including the Iron Man suit, no longer seem so infallible. A mysterious group called the Mandarin broke into Stark Industries and hijacked the Iron Man armor. Who is The Mandarin? What do they want? And how do they know so much about Stark Industries? Tony's on a mission to find out – but the truth might lie closer to home than he ever imagined...

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Miiiiss Carol Danvers. What brings you to my humble--
Pearls, Tony?
Let me guess: Jarvis picked these?
Because either he did, or you think that you're still allowed to get me a romantic gift.
You were always telling me to keep the past alive.
I told you to learn from the past.
Give them to some other girl. I'm sure they're not returnable.
You always did make me work for it.
It's why I like you.
Okay, don't be mad, dear. I'm sorry about the pearls.
Can we kiss and make up now?
What in the world are you doing?
You think I'm some silly reporter or something?
I'm a prominent official in the U.S. government, Tony.
Hands off.



Okay, okay.
But seriously, you didn't miss me...
...in bed?
Insult me like that one more time and I'll make your life miserable, Stark.
Then why are you here, Carol?
Because when our most valued defense manufacturer is cyber-attacked and almost killed, the Pentagon expects a briefing.
Oh it was nothing. That armor needed an upgrade or two anyway. They saved me the chore of recycling.
When I know something, I'll call and brief you--
Actually, I'm here to brief you, Tony.
Turns out, we know who came after you. At least, we know who designed the worm that took out your firewall--
--because the same worm infiltrated a S.H.I.E.L.D. database four years ago. Or some version of it.
It was designed, legally, by someone at South Pacific Financial. It has a patent.
What do you know about South Pacific?
Not a single thing.
We've been investigating for years. The search turned up nothing. Every time we get close, the government of China intervenes and threatens trade restrictions.
Seems like South Pacific has some powerful allies.
BEEP BEEP


They don't trade publicly, but they hold hundreds of patents in China.
Any politician who has ever started to look into them--has suddenly stopped.
BEEP BEEP
Well I can tell you something about South Pacific: They don't exist. At least not in the Chinese stock markets.
But whatever they are, they may be the key to this Mandarin thing. Or at least a good place to start looking.
Jarvis, South Pacific Financial. Where are they headquartered?
Hong Kong. Uploading the address now.
You've known this how long? When were you going to brief us?
I guess we forgot.
We keep files on all potential competition. At one point they bought up a bunch of old Soviet weapons. We took note.
South Pacific appears to be a holding company, sir. And their headquarters are on the edge of the financial district. I can't find anything more about them.
What are you doing?
I'm going to knock on the door, and ask them nicely what they want with my files.
Not sure I support you going into China in what could be an escalating military action--
Oh, no, I misspoke. That's not why I'm going. Not at all.
Then what are you doing?
Well you didn't like the pearls...
...so I'm going to buy you a more appropriate gift...


I hear Hong Kong has great shopping.
Jarvis, link in. I'm heading over the Pacific.
Also, make a note: Ms. Danvers isn't a fan of pearls.


SIX HOURS LATER.
I'm callin' on the phone, hey hey hey, is Jarvis home?
You didn't fall asleep on me, did you?
I always appreciate when you sing to me, sir.
So what's the good word?
All quiet on the electronic front here.
Firewall is rebuilt, but all trails toward the Mandarin have come up cold.
Well, hopefully there are answers here.
I have the South Pacific Company skyscraper ahead. Doesn't look like much... something familiar here, though.
Thermal shows no one inside.
So, since they weren't polite enough to knock on our door...
BZZZZ


Might just be me, Jarvis, but I think this company has done some downsizing...
...or never had any employees, at all. This carpet is brand-new.
There's nothing here, Jarvis. Can you get into city records? See who applied for these permits, and when?
I've got floor after empty floor here. Who builds a skyscraper and doesn't put anything in it?
Someone wanting to look like a legitimate company?
I'm looking through the records, Mr. Stark, and I see that of the forty-four floors, thirty were leased to various companies in China...
A group called... Mandarin International.
We were right, all roads do seem to lead to the Mandarin.
Hold that thought. I have company.
Elevator.
DING


Hmm...it's empty. But...
That's the symbol on my father's coin. Why would--
BOOM!!
Jarvis, I have contact.
Identify!
UNIDENTIFIED SECURITY DRONE:
ATTACK MODE ACTIVE.
No you don't!


I've got some kind of-- urgh--security drones--
I don't recognize the designs.
Jarvis, who outside of the military has an arsenal like this?
I don't think so, Jarvis.
If they were a contractor, a paper trail would be easy to find.
Sir, is it possible Mandarin is another defense contractor? Chinese military?
It might explain--
Unh!
Besides, the Chinese military will take notice of this nonsense at any moment....
Unless all of the traffic is diverted away, and the cameras are off...
Four o'clock! Four o'clock!


BOOM!
Just missed.
Going to get another glimpse inside that elevator.
I need another look at that symbol.
Copy, but you might want to be quick. I'm picking up local police chatter...seems there's a disturbance in your area of Hong Kong...
Caused by a lone lunatic in a metal suit. No mention of drones. I think someone is pinning this on you.
Which means the drones will be pulling back. I can follow one...
But first let me look in here...
So was the elevator a distraction, or a message?
Elevator goes down quite a ways. I'm going to--
EEEEEEEEEEEEE!
AUGH!
What is it, sir?
Stop it! Stop that sound!
EEEEEEEEEEEEEEE!
What is it? You're-- break-- up--!
Jarvis? Jarvis?

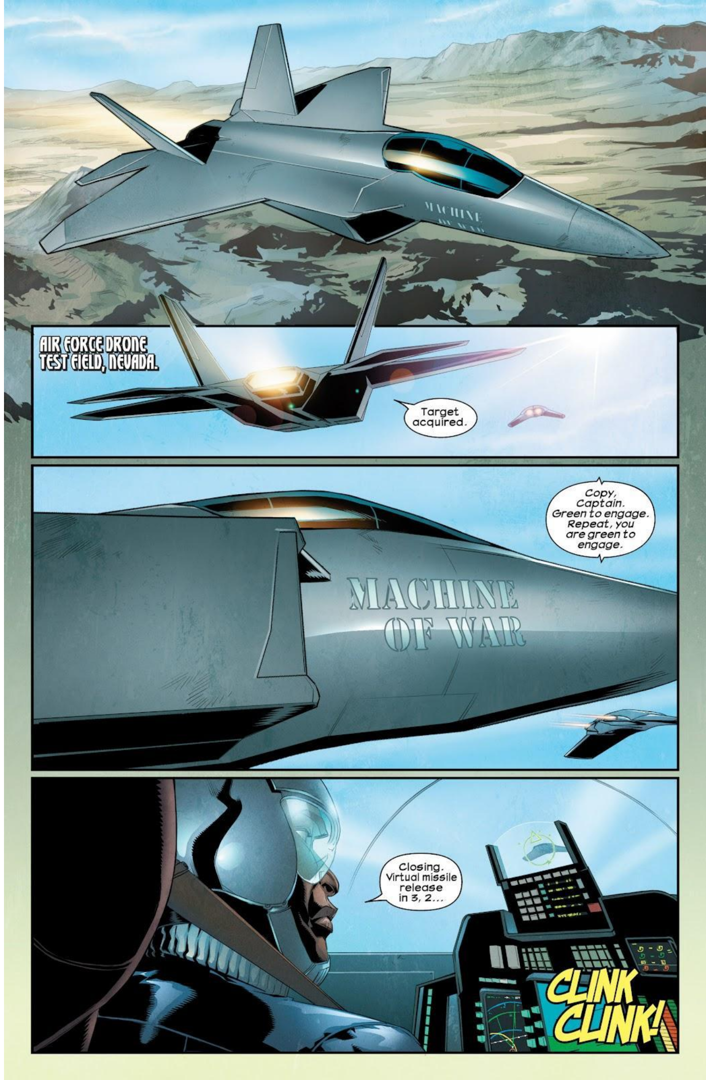

EEEEEE!
My head! My head!
Autopilot engage. RTB! RTB!
T--y? --o--?
Ungh...
Tony, can you hear me?
"I'm tired of waiting, dad."


TEN YEARS AGO.
I don't understand why we can't go to the CEO directly.
It's not how business is done on their side of the world.
"Believe me, I have a long history of working with Asian companies.
"They expect you to earn your way in to their confidence slowly. Their business world operates with *rings of trust*.
You don't climb. You are invited from one to another."
To do business with them means to be patient.
But business moves quickly. How can you--
They aren't investing in now, Tony. They are investing in the *future*. Our future. Their future. They build companies for the next generations.
We could take a lesson from them. Not to be hasty, not to be *reckless*.
Not to be... emotional.
We're not all *machines* like you, Dad.
"Tony? Tony, wake up or I'll throw more ice water on you."


Uuuugh...
I'd like to speak to the manager about the wake-up calls in this establishment...
Tony, why do you do this to yourself? Your impatience borders on masochism.
Jarvis?
You had a concussion, sir. Unconscious when the auto-pilot brought you back.
See, Carol? I was *unconscious* at the time. So I'm innocent of whatever you're accusing me--
Before you give me some lip, you should be aware of something.
The government of China is prepared to sue you personally-- as well as *Stark Industries*--for an estimated *13 million* in damages. Guess who's standing in their way right now?
Just me.
Stark Industries, too? Does that sound odd to you? Seems odd to me.
Why not sue me for more than my *personal assets* and have the company siphoned that way?
Almost as if they want Stark Industries in the press, isn't it?
Jarvis, I presume we're taking a hit for the attack on Endotherm?
We're down six points.
Six? Devaluing our stock could almost be Mandarin's *real* goal.

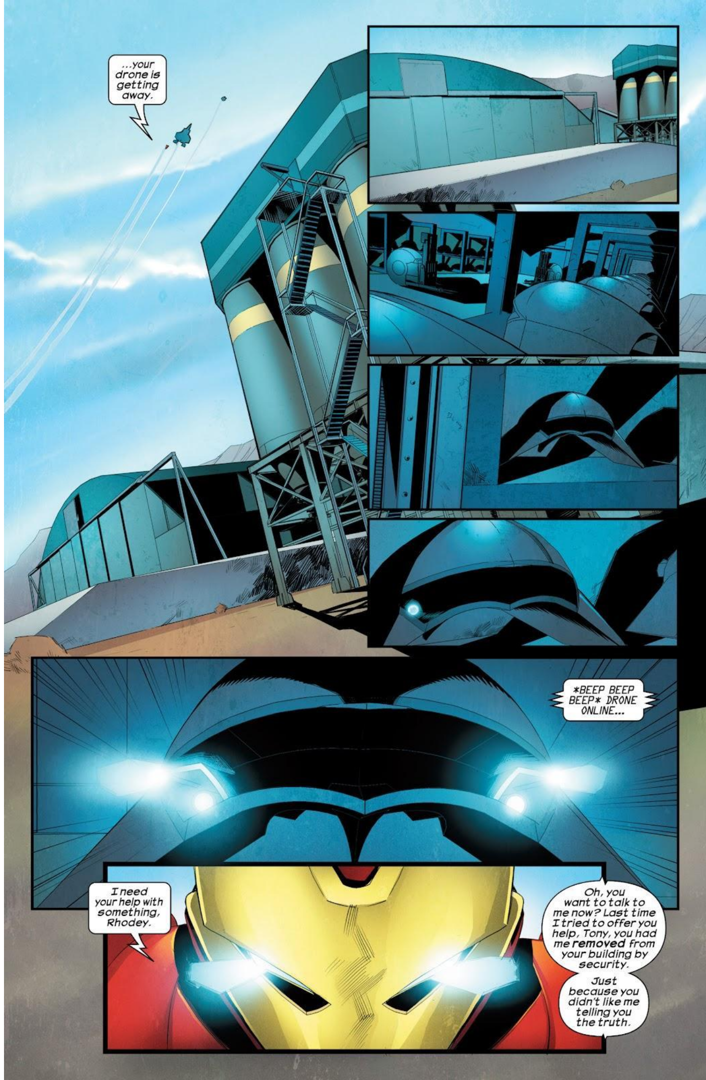


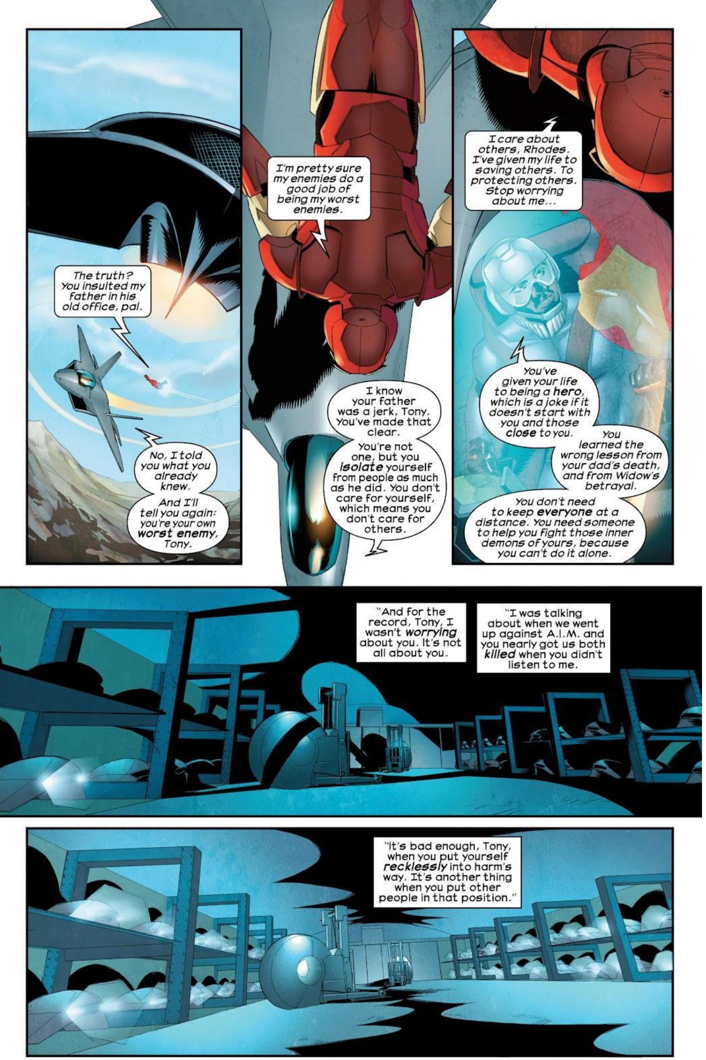
Using the government might save you some money. It could even save your *life*. You aren't a nation unto yourself.
Which is why I'm going to get some military assistance.
Military? You don't have friends in the military right now, Tony.
Doesn't seem like I have many around here, either.
Jarvis, I need you to keep looking into the Mandarin Company...
No company is that invisible. There must be a trail. There must be something.
Meanwhile, I'm going to get an outside opinion and find out how it is that Mandarin has technology that can bypass my EMP-insulated suit.
You're just going to jump right back in, aren't you? I wish you'd listen to me. Tony, I--I--
You care?
I can't *afford* for you to be defeated.
I'm not going to fight about it right now, Carol.
Going to find a wingman.



MACHINE OF WAR
AIR FORCE DRONE TEST FIELD, NEVADA.
Target acquired.
Copy, Captain. Green to engage. Repeat, you are green to engage.
MACHINE OF WAR
Closing. Virtual missile release in 3, 2...
CLINK CLINK!


Pardon me, sir, looking for Interstate Fifty...?
Tony, get off my bird!
I'm in the middle of testing your drones.
Sorry, Rhodey, didn't the Air Force request I aid in these targeting exercises? It is my system, after all.
Yes, and you "politely declined." National security isn't as important to you as some redhead.
Blonde. She was blonde. And I knew you had it handled.
Either way, you're in the way now.
Whoa. You scratched my armor, pal.
Also...


...your drone is getting away.
BEEP BEEP BEEP DRONE ONLINE...
I need your help with something, Rhodey.
Oh, you want to talk to me now? Last time I tried to offer you help, Tony, you had me removed from your building by security.
Just because you didn't like me telling you the truth.



The truth? You insulted my father in his old office, pal.
No, I told you what you already knew.
And I'll tell you again: you're your own *worst enemy*, Tony.
I'm pretty sure my enemies do a good job of being my worst enemies.
I know your father was a jerk, Tony. You've made that clear.
You're not one, but you *isolate* yourself from people as much as he did. You don't care for yourself, which means you don't care for others.
I care about others, Rhodes. I've given my life to saving others. To protecting others. Stop worrying about me...
You've given your life to being a *hero*, which is a joke if it doesn't start with you and those *close* to you.
You learned the wrong *lesson* from your dad's death, and from Widow's betrayal.
You don't need to keep *everyone* at a distance. You need someone to help you fight those inner demons of yours, because you can't do it alone.
"And for the record, Tony, I wasn't *worrying* about you. It's not all about you.
"I was talking about when we went up against A.I.M. and you nearly got us both *killed* when you didn't listen to me.
"It's bad enough, Tony, when you put yourself *recklessly* into harm's way. It's another thing when you put other people in that position."



BOOM!
Rhodes, I didn't come here for a *lecture*. Someone hacked into my company and they seem to be using that information against me.
I need you to come with--
BOOM!
Hey, I'm trying to talk to you--
That wasn't me!
I'm not loaded up with any weapons...


Unfortunately, Stark drones are.
And I think someone just stole the keys.
To Be Continued...


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LIKE ANY BILLIONAIRE WITH A GENIUS IQ, TONY STARK HAS IT ALL: FAST CARS, A THRIVING COMPANY, AND A STEADY STREAM OF AVAILABLE WOMEN. BUT HE HAS ONE THING THAT NO ONE ELSE DOES: THE WORLD'S MOST POWERFUL SUIT OF ARMOR. WITH HIS BRAINS, HIS MONEY, AND HIS ARMOR, STARK PROTECTS THE WORLD AS. . .

IRON MAN



PREVIOUSLY . . .

Before he was Iron Man, before he was CEO of Stark Industries, Tony Stark was a young man living under the shadow of his father. In response to his father's pressure, Tony took over the family business and threw himself into his inventions.

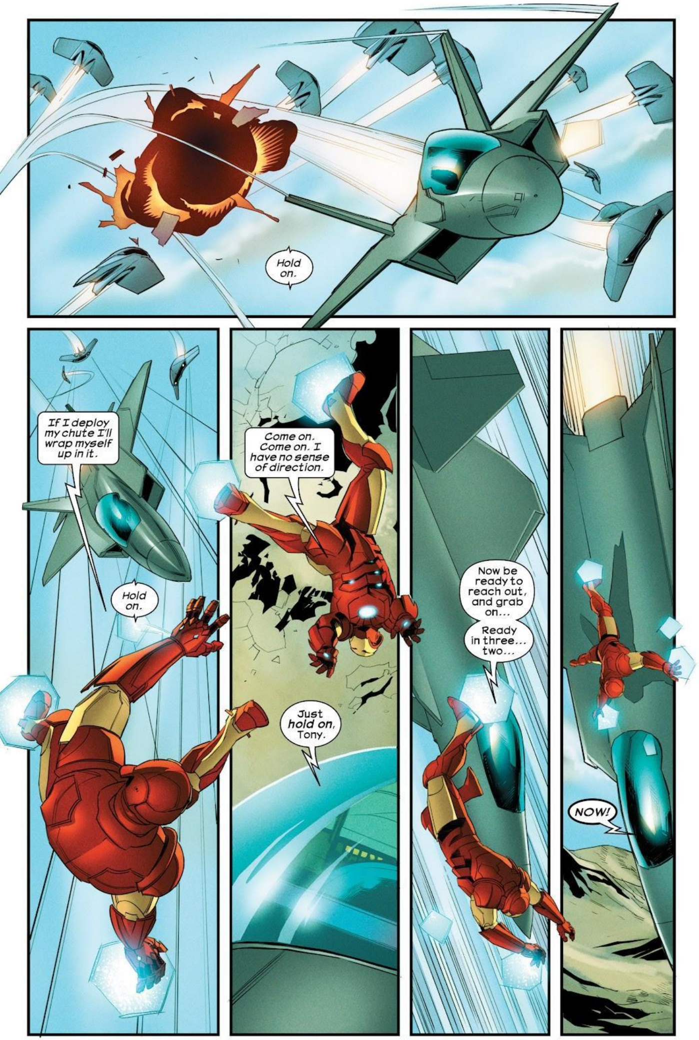
But Tony's greatest invention, the Iron Man armor, was sabotaged by the mysterious group called the Mandarin. Tony followed the trail to Hong Kong, where he found an empty warehouse and a symbol on the floor, one he recognized from his father's lucky coin. Before he could investigate, he was attacked and his armor disabled—again. Tony has turned to his old friend, Jim Rhodes, for help, but they have a more immediate problem—drones created by Stark Industries have turned rogue. Who is controlling Tony's inventions?

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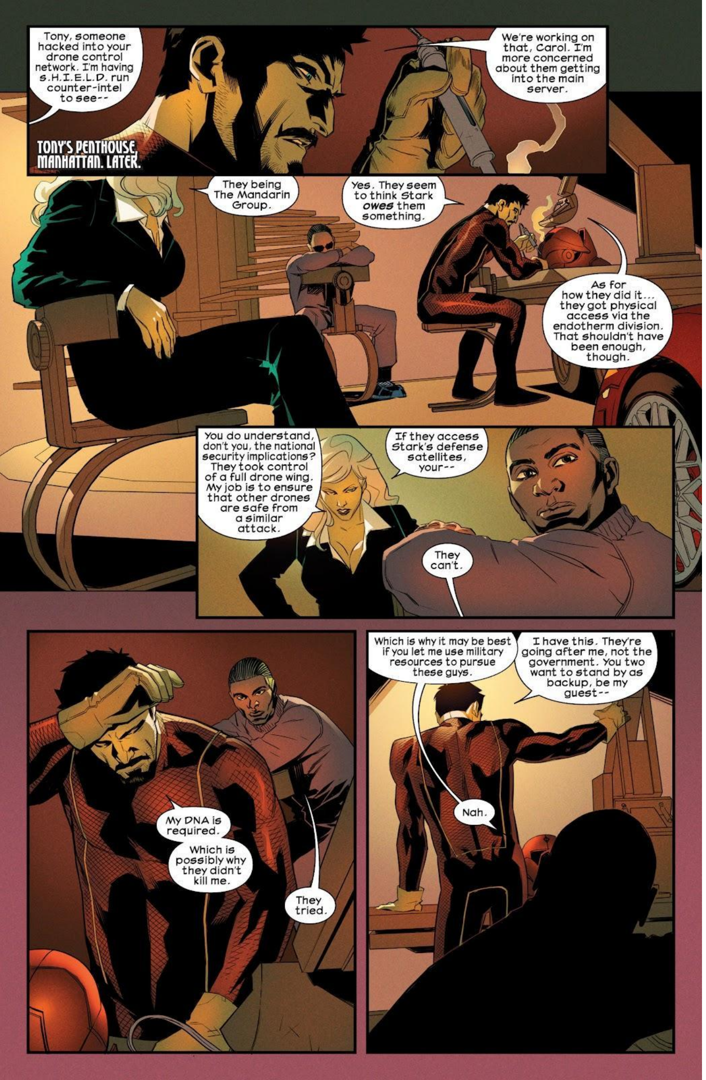



So excuse me while I deal with--
Get out of my way, Tony!
BOOM!
Don't have weapons, but I can still throw an elbow.
BOOM!
Okay. Okay. Not bad for a fixed-winger.
I'm starting to wish my drones weren't so popular...
Did this model come standard with a ghost-in-the-machine?
No, **this** is what I came to talk to you about. Someone's been hacking into Stark tech--
At your two o'clock!
Jarvis, tap in.
Track the signal. Where are they hacking us from?
Jarvis?
Hello, Mr. Stark.
Who is this?
This is the Mandarin, Mr. Stark. You came to visit us. We are sorry that we weren't able to talk, but we only speak on **our** terms.


Tony, hello? Tony! We have incoming.
I have no visual, Rhodes.
They've hacked into my H.U.D.
Tell me what you want.
We want what is **ours**, Tony. Goodbye.
Tony, where are you?!
Can't see, Rhodes. Can't see.
Tony, hello? Do you have control?
No, artificial horizon isn't responding. Can't see. Don't know which way is up!


Hold on.
If I deploy my chute I'll wrap myself up in it.
Hold on.
Come on. Come on. I have no sense of direction.
Just hold on, Tony.
Now be ready to reach out, and grab on...
Ready in three... two...
NOW!


KRRCH!
Got you.
You're pretty handy in that clunker.
I had plenty of time.
Your inflated sense of self-worth was slowing your fall.


Tony, someone hacked into your drone control network. I'm having S.H.I.E.L.D. run counter-intel to see--
We're working on that, Carol. I'm more concerned about them getting into the main server.
TONY'S PENTHOUSE, MANHATTAN. LATER.
They being The Mandarin Group.
Yes. They seem to think Stark owes them something.
As for how they did it... they got physical access via the endotherm division. That shouldn't have been enough, though.
You do understand, don't you, the national security implications? They took control of a full drone wing. My job is to ensure that other drones are safe from a similar attack.
If they access Stark's defense satellites, your--
They can't.
My DNA is required.
Which is possibly why they didn't kill me.
They tried.
Which is why it may be best if you let me use military resources to pursue these guys.
I have this. They're going after me, not the government. You two want to stand by as backup, be my guest--
Nah.


You may be a rockstar, but I'm not your backup dancer.
You can defend yourself. I'll be ready to defend the country if you fail.
What does he want, an apology?
You blame him, Tony? You don't trust a soul on this planet and you're surprised when no one takes a risk for you?
Trust leads to dependence. Dependence means you don't control your world.
Iron Man is my Control.
The only thing I need to trust is this armor.
And yet it's the one thing that hasn't been able to protect you these days.
You need to learn to trust things you can't control.
If I do that, Carol, someone usually dies. Iron Man stops that from happening.
Use the machine, Tony. Don't become a machine.
It's not the hero. You are.


10 YEARS AGO.
Nice resemblance.
My dad's eyes were mean. Statues can't get the eyes right.
Your dad had many facets. *Mean* is not the one we should remember him by.
Is that S.H.I.E.L.D.'s official position, Director Fury?
He had his demons. He wasn't one. Remember that.

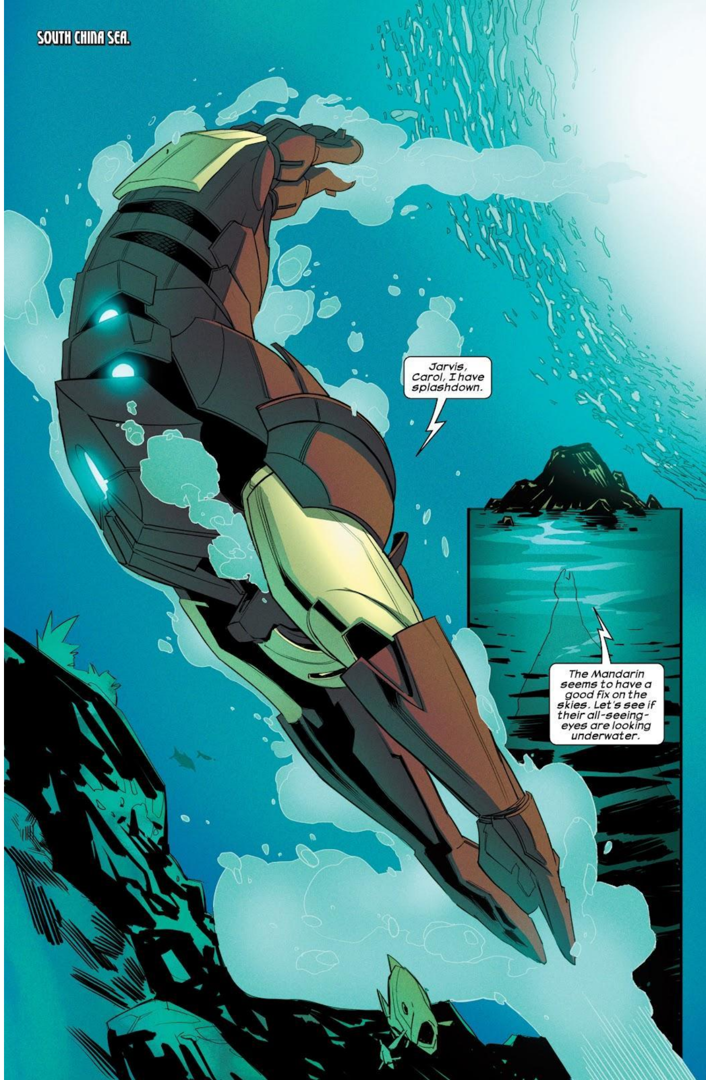

He's left you the keys to the kingdom.
He left me his money.
And a coin which was a *"reminder that in the jungle, there are no friends. Only predators."*
A coin in my hand, and coins in a vault...
He's left you a company, built on his own shoulders. He's left you power, the ability to make a difference in the world.
He's left you an obligation to the future.
Let me guess. Now you tell me what I can do for you...
No, Tony, that part is up to you. Your father had his demons, but he was a good man.
My hope is you learn to exorcise yours earlier than he did, so that you become a *great* man.
When you do, you can figure out what to do with the company.
Just remember, when your father needed help he came to us.
Don't be afraid to do the same thing if you find yourself in over your head.


NOW.
Wait a minute...
Carol, wait.
This is what my father meant. He was in trouble before.
What do you mean?
My father asked for S.H.I.E.L.D.'s help. It had something to do with the Mandarin.
If you can help me look into S.H.I.E.L.D.'s files on him, we can find them.
Please, Carol.


STARK INDUSTRIES. LATER.
Anything?
Carol's given me access to all of S.H.I.E.L.D.'s archives. They have copies of much of what the Mandarin erased from yours...
Look at travel records, Jarvis.
My father made frequent trips to Hong Kong in the fledgling years of this company.
And after each trip, Stark Industries received an influx of cash within six months.
The building where I was attacked wasn't the Mandarin headquarters. But I think my father's travel records will tell us where it is.
Got something.
Receipts here. Your father kept a private plane at Hong Kong International...model DHC-3...
Flight records?
No, but fuel records. They give us a flight distance of anywhere within this *ring*.
Not necessarily.



"We're looking for an island."
"Why?"
DHC-3 is a Dehavilland Otter.
An unusual choice because it also happens to be a seaplane. Water landing.
"Okay. I have a number of islands..."
"...anything of note on one of the islands. Power plant, communications center--"
I have something here, massive power cables underwater leading directly to a seemingly deserted island.
Is it listed? Research site? Military?
No listing at all.
"That's our spot."
"So what will you do?"
"I'm going for a swim."
Tony, you should sit tight, I'm calling S.H.I.E.L.D for reinforcements.
You do that, Carol. They can sit by as backup.
Rhodey was right. This is *my* battle to fight.



SOUTH CHINA SEA.
Jarvis, Carol, I have splashdown.
The Mandarin seems to have a good fix on the skies. Let's see if their all-seeing-eyes are looking underwater.


Launching surveillance drone.
I have feed.
Me too. Let's track a tiger, shall we?


Heat signatures are at island interior...
Should see something up ahead.
I've still got nothing. Jarvis, are you sure you read the map correctly?
The heat signature is distinct. I'm not sure what--
Yep, this is the place.
Tony, after everything, are you sure flying into a volatile environment is the wisest thing to do? Have you considered that's exactly what they're expecting?
Can't talk now, Carol. Flying into a volatile environment.


I'm guessing subterranean. Right Jarvis?
Only thing that makes sense.
Hold that thought. I have something ahead. It's...
...a nano-swarm.
Which can come **right through my suit**.
Jarvis, any time you can find the door to this place...
Looking now, sir.


Tony, I have a concrete bunker just north of you. Could be an entrance.
It had better be. The first ones are inside the armor. Penetrating my thermal layer.
I've got something. No time to knock!


We, young master Stark. Who are *we*.
We are the agents of control. The caretakers.
Caretakers of what?
The Mandarin, child. Li, hold him please.
Not so strong without your suit, are you? Nothing special at all.
And thank you for your DNA, young master. It was the last piece we needed...
To give *control* of Stark back to whom it belongs:
Us.
To Be Continued...


-uff!-
Jarvis, you see what I see?
Jarvis-- hello?
No more nanites...
They're not allowed in here.
No autonomous machinations are permitted within the inner circle.
And I'm afraid I'm going to have to say the same about your little toy suit. Li? His suit, if you will.
How-- how--are you doing--
Ugh-- who--ah-- are you?


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IRON MAN



PREVIOUSLY . . .

Before he was CEO of Stark Industries, Tony Stark was planning a future with his girlfriend, Josey. But Howard Stark had other plans for his son and pressured him into taking over the family business. Six months later, Josey was killed in a plane crash and the grieving Tony threw himself into his inventions.

Now all of Tony's inventions, including the Iron Man suit, have been compromised by a group called The Mandarin. Tony's defense satellites, which require his DNA, are the only machines they can't operate. After discovering the Mandarin symbol on his father's lucky coin, Tony continued to uncover mysterious connections between the terrorist group and the late Howard Stark. Tony's research led him to an island in the South China Sea. There, the "caretakers" of The Mandarin ambushed Tony, disabled the Iron Man suit, and stole his DNA!

Now, Tony is the only thing standing between The Mandarin and control of Stark Industries! But without his suit, does he even stand a chance?

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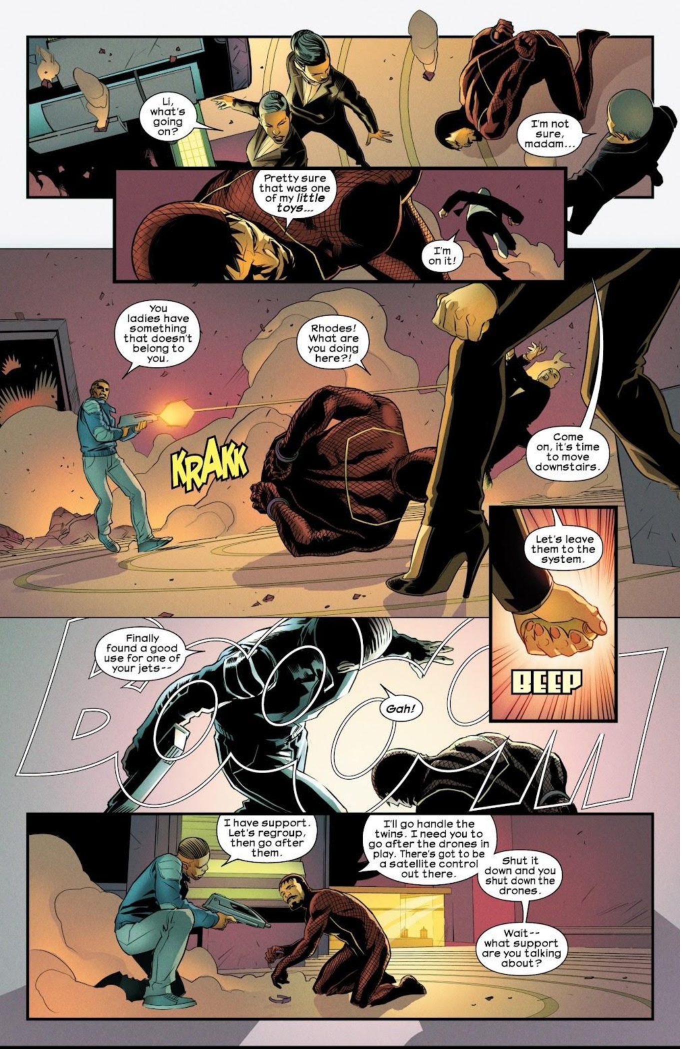



...we punish.
The DNA sample worked. I'm in the Stark satellite cortex.
STARK INDUSTRIES
MILITARY CORTEX ACCESS
And so we bypass the man...
Would you like to watch as we punish your father?
He took from us and then he forgot us. So we're going to take his drones...
...and use them against his friends.
He's dead. Why now?
We had calculated that your leadership would bring Stark to its peak of command, solidifying The Mandarin power structure.
But your super heroic exploits have kept you distracted... leaving Stark Industries stagnant. Which was not The Mandarin's plan.
So now, it is time to set things right again.
You sure you're not mad my dad dumped you?
Yeah, I recognized you. One of his flings--Taki.
Our arrangement with your father was strictly business...even this romance.
Activating now.
Now watch Stark Industries crumble...
...pushed over the edge by a few drops of your blood. The Mandarin will be there to pick up the pieces.
STARK INDUSTRIES
MILITARY CORTEX ACCESS
REMOTE CONTROL ACCESS
STARK_DR_1331X2
Stop this. Stop this!


UNITED STATES MILITARY BASE, VIRGINIA.
"There are innocent people down there!"
"Are you trying to give orders, young Stark? You don't seem to understand...
"...you are no longer in control."
"STOP!"
BOOM
NOOOOO!
Tase him, Li, would you?!
Young Stark, you're just not much without your toys.
Your father had the same weakness. He trusted only what he could build himself.


Now, attack the others.
RAMMSTEIN AIR BASE, GERMANY.
BOOM!
I don't know! I've lost all control! I'm stalling out!
"It's not right..."
...even with access to Stark Cortex you shouldn't have this level of control...
We helped design your drone program. Like your suit, we know *every* weakness.
This is my company. *Mine.*
Your ownership was always an illusion, young Stark.
BEEP BEEP BEEP BEEP

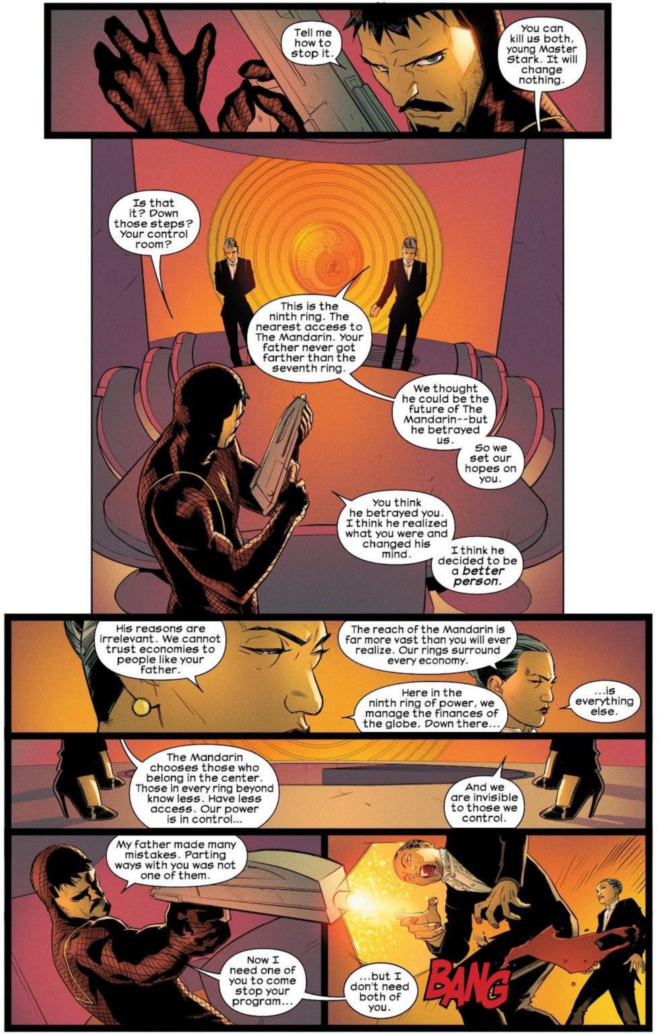

What is it?
Airspace breach.
Pull it up on screen.
Enabling defense...but he's coming fast--
Shoot him down! Now!
I'm going down...
Phase One is a go.
BOOM


Li, what's going on?
I'm not sure, madam...
Pretty sure that was one of my *little toys...*
I'm on it!
You ladies have something that doesn't belong to you.
Rhodes! What are you doing here?!
KRAKK
Come on, it's time to move downstairs.
Let's leave them to the system.
BEEP
Finally found a good use for one of your jets--
Gah!
BOOOOM
I have support. Let's regroup, then go after them.
I'll go handle the twins. I need you to go after the drones in play. There's got to be a satellite control out there.
Shut it down and you shut down the drones.
Wait-- what support are you talking about?


This is Rhodes. I'm in. Send the packages.
Copy That, War Machine.
3...2... 1...
Liftoff. E.T.A. 60 seconds, sir.
...I brought some real muscle.
Good. stay up top and defend--
I'm sure their drones will be swarming on us any minute.
I can't put on my suit. They'll just use it against me in here.
But I'll take the gun.



"Go suit up, War Machine. I'm gonna need your back up."
"Son, business is ruthless as life in the jungle."
"People are assets, never to be trusted."
"Soon Stark Industries will be yours."
And when that happens you will be alone in the jungle.
Take care that you are the tiger--the *master* of your jungle...
Do not let the jungle be the master of you.
That's why I carry *this*. As a reminder.
I always thought this was some souvenir.
...No, Tony...
"...it's a symbol."
DING



Tell me how to stop it.
You can kill us both, young Master Stark. It will change nothing.
Is that it? Down those steps? Your control room?
This is the ninth ring. The nearest access to The Mandarin. Your father never got farther than the seventh ring.
We thought he could be the future of The Mandarin--but he betrayed us.
So we set our hopes on you.
You think he betrayed you. I think he realized what you were and changed his mind.
I think he decided to be a ***better person***.
His reasons are irrelevant. We cannot trust economies to people like your father.
The reach of the Mandarin is far more vast than you will ever realize. Our rings surround every economy.
Here in the ninth ring of power, we manage the finances of the globe. Down there...
...is everything else.
The Mandarin chooses those who belong in the center. Those in every ring beyond know less. Have less access. Our power is in control...
And we are invisible to those we control.
My father made many mistakes. Parting ways with you was not one of them.
Now I need one of you to come stop your program...
...but I don't need both of you.
BANG


Rhodes, this is Captain Crocker. Awaiting your word for island launch.
Copy, Captain. Hold until my signal. There are still a few surprises on this island...
CLANG!
Ow!
Ah-ha.
Not so bad.
No more advanced than one of Stark's...

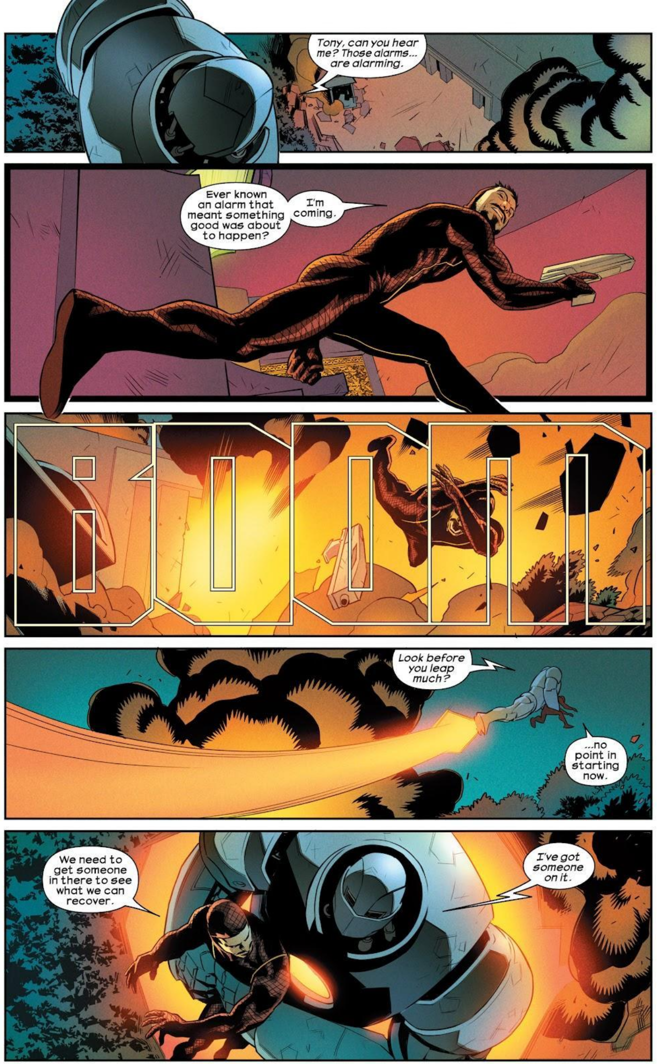

But there's just...a whole lot more of 'em.
Kill us, Stark. It makes no difference.
Not going to kill you. I'm going to cut the strings. You, I'm going to turn over to the people whose economies you're toying with.
Wait, this? This is it? This is central terminal?
You can't stop The Mandarin. Kill me and it will replace me with another caretaker.
Any company can be stopped. Even Stark. Even The Mandarin.
Do to me what you wish. The Mandarin will correct these mistakes. As it corrected so many at Stark. As it corrected your little Josey, as I recall.
What did you just say?
Yes, Master. I understand.


You think that plane crash was an accident? So naive...
Your father was good at many things. Keeping you in line was not one of them.
We invest in the future. Your father understood you needed to be part of that future. But he wasn't willing to take the right measures to ensure it. So we did.
The Mandarin removed your little distraction.
You have always lacked the self-control your father had. He confessed this to me many a night.
He thought you were reckless.
You... killed Josey...
Your father tried to teach you, but you ignored his lessons.
You... you...
You're wrong.
I didn't ignore my father's lessons, I misunderstood them.
Oh, spare me, boy.

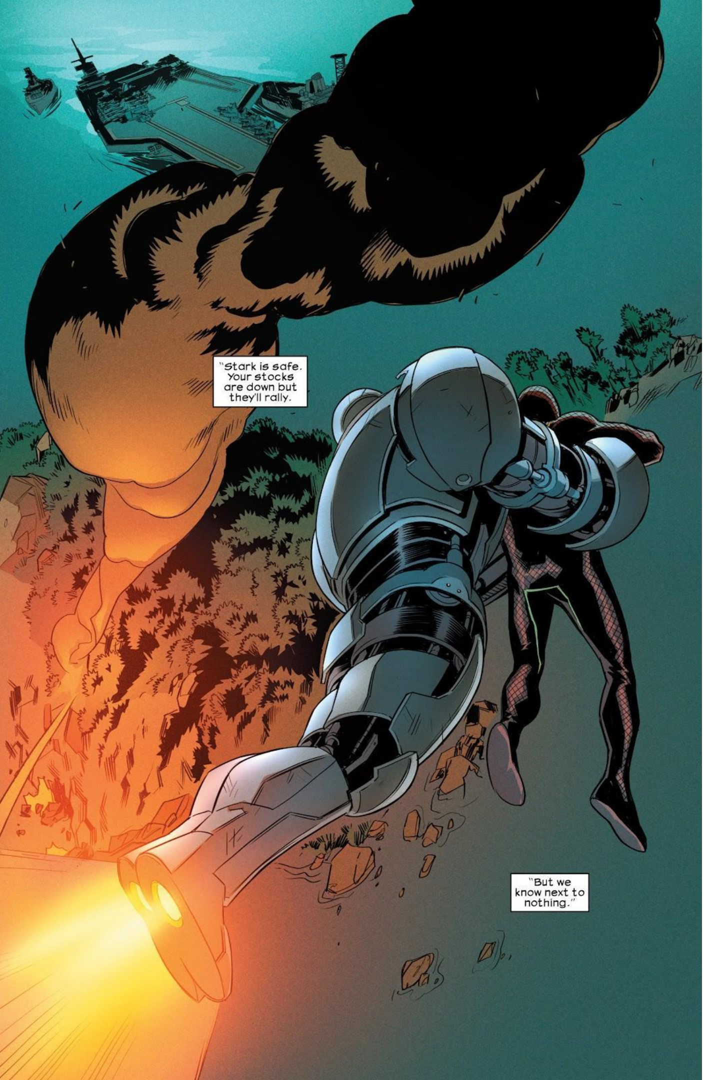

I'll spare your life.
But shut you down.
You know when you keep yourself isolated down here behind all this armor, you're protected from everything outside.
But when there's a hole in that armor, and something gets inside, there's no one to call, is there?
When something gets inside, it can do so much damage.
See, I've been analyzing the program you used to break into my networks...and I've learned its weakness.
It helps to have friends outside, it turns out.
Right, Jarvis?
Right you are, sir. And we're in. Firewalls failing. Virus uploading.
My father gave me your coin to warn me about you.
To remind me to be the man, not the machine.
And in the end, it's that man bringing down your machine.



Come at me! I can go all day!
Well that was easy.
It will all be undone, Mr. Stark. They will take back control.
Control, Ma'am, is delegation, not despotism. It's democracy, not--
BANG
What the--?
BANG
ATTENTION! FACILITY IMPLOSION IMMINENT!
Well that's no good.



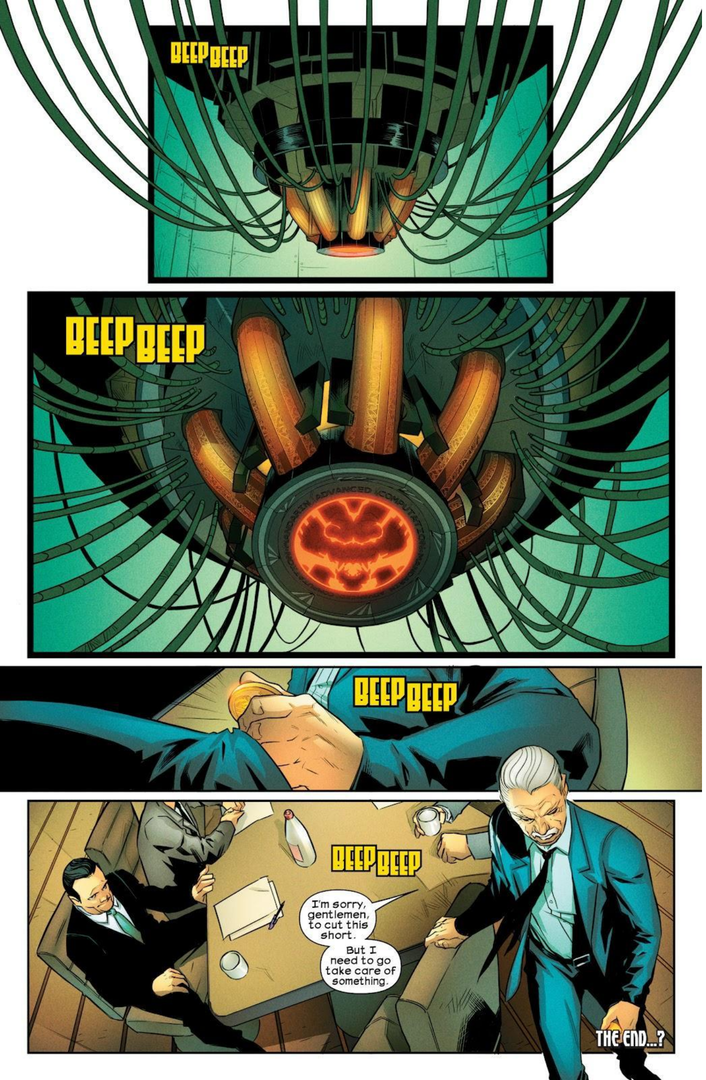
Tony, can you hear me? Those alarms... are alarming.
Ever known an alarm that meant something good was about to happen?
I'm coming.
Look before you leap much?
...no point in starting now.
We need to get someone in there to see what we can recover.
I've got someone on it.


"Stark is safe. Your stocks are down but they'll rally.
"But we know next to nothing."


...who else worked for The Mandarin? How did these women build it?
Again, I don't believe they were The Mandarin. It's the company. They were caretakers. And to hear them tell it...
...The Mandarin "employed" millions at its outermost rings of control.
We've cut the head off the snake, or the tiger, I guess. But we'll have to watch and see what kind of fallout remains. Economic, terroristic...
At least we won't get caught with our pants around our ankles next time.
But...
But?
But I can't do it alone.


JOSEY
GARDNER
brilliant
and
Not going to leave the flowers, sir?
Nah. She hated flowers. Don't know what I was thinking.
It was my fault, Jarvis.
I thought only about myself. I saw nothing but myself. That's why she was killed.
Sir, it's certainly not fair for you to blame--
No, it's okay. I'm not flagellating myself.
The past is the past. Regret does us no good.
But I made the choice to leave her. No one made it for me.
And I just have to learn to live with that.

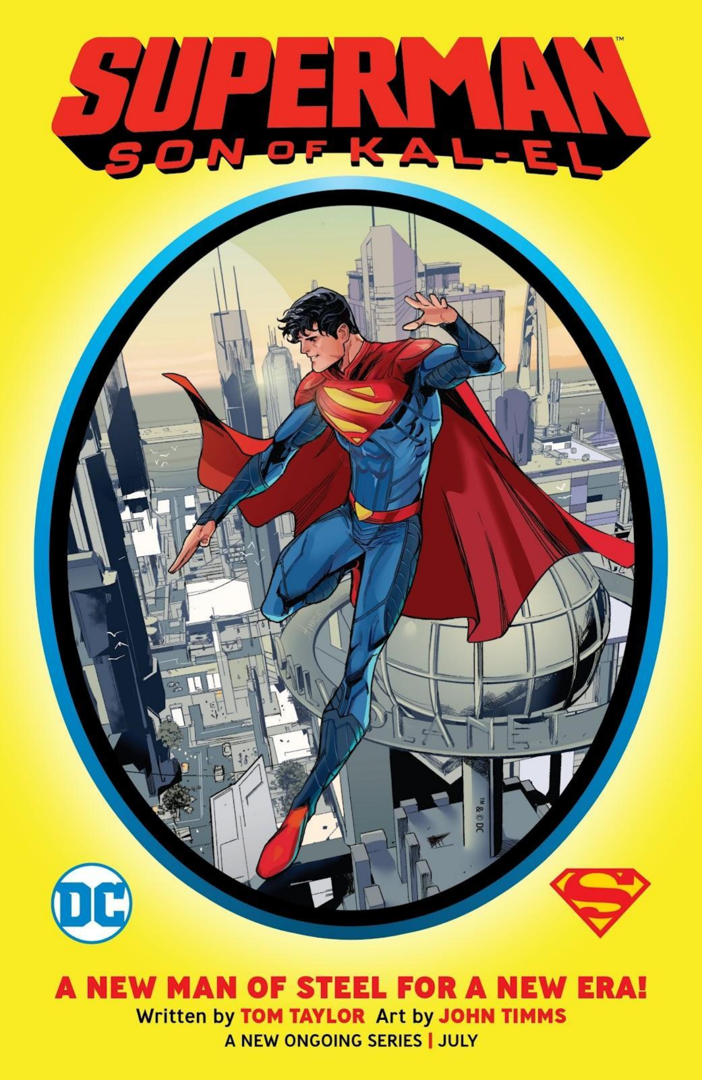

AN ISLAND IN THE SOUTH CHINA SEA.
TWO DAYS LATER.
"There's simply nothing to recover."
We'll keep searching, but you'll have to warn the national security advisor that there may not be much to find.
The facility seems like it was designed to erase itself.
"The power was geothermal. Came from offshore vents.
"But I'm not sure if we'll ever really learn anything.
"Or who The Mandarin truly was..."
BEEP BEEP

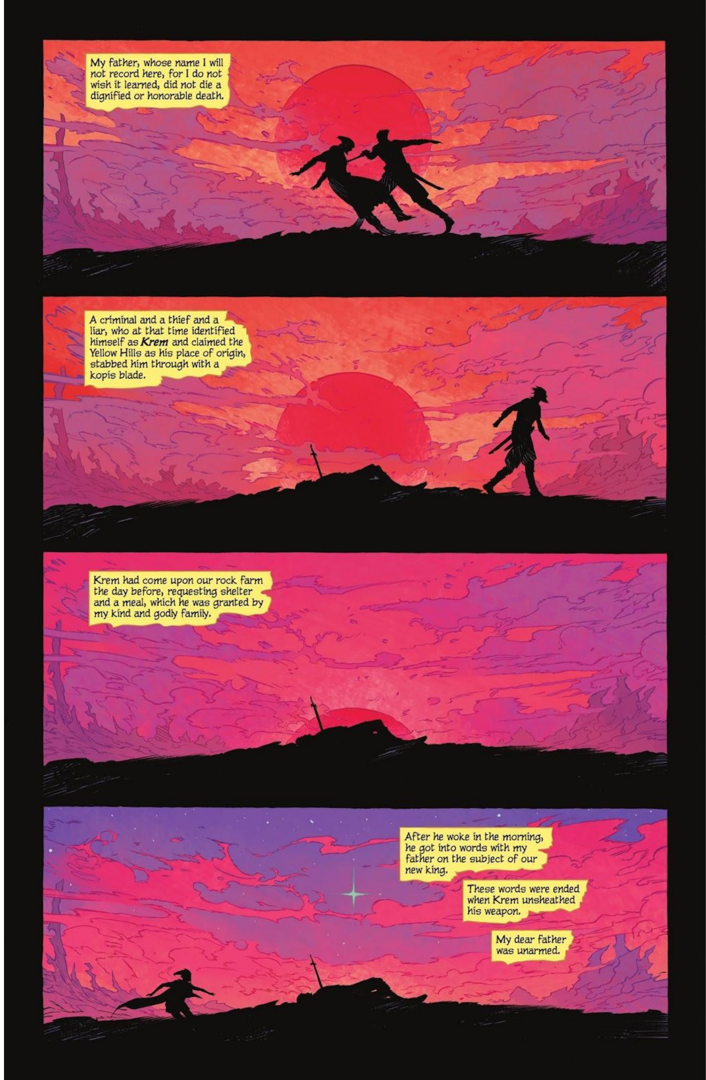

BEEP BEEP
BEEP BEEP
BEEP BEEP
BEEP BEEP
I'm sorry, gentlemen, to cut this short.
But I need to go take care of something.
THE END...?


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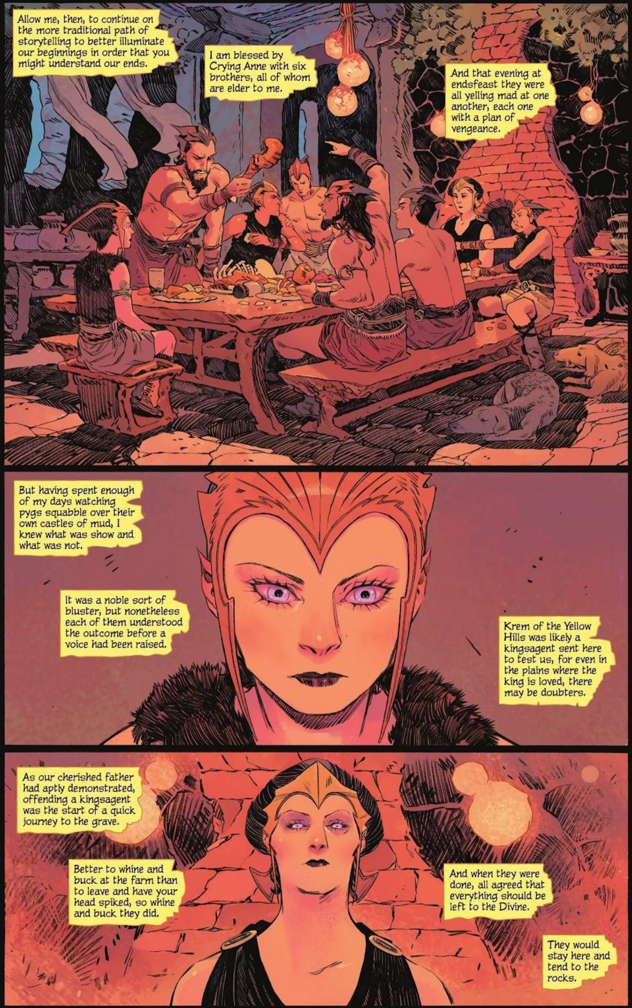
DC
INFINITE FRONTIER
SUPERGIRL
WOMAN OF TOMORROW
1 of 8
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SUPERMAN
SON OF KAL-EL
A NEW MAN OF STEEL FOR A NEW ERA!
Written by TOM TAYLOR Art by JOHN TIMMS
A NEW ONGOING SERIES | JULY


My father, whose name I will not record here, for I do not wish it learned, did not die a dignified or honorable death.
A criminal and a thief and a liar, who at that time identified himself as **Krem** and claimed the Yellow Hills as his place of origin, stabbed him through with a kopis blade.
Krem had come upon our rock farm the day before, requesting shelter and a meal, which he was granted by my kind and godly family.
After he woke in the morning, he got into words with my father on the subject of our new king.
These words were ended when Krem unsheathed his weapon.
My dear father was unarmed.



It vexed me at the time that Krem left his blade within the body, for in truth it was a finely crafted sword.
Worthy, I would think, of even the Knights of the Old Mist.
I can testify that it was not lodged so deep within the chest cavity that it could not be removed with alacrity even in the moment of murder.
If a child, which I was at the time despite my many protests to the contrary, could claim the weapon with a simple tug...
...what was it that prevented Krem from rescuing it?
I had meant to ask him, and even had the question on my tongue when *Supergirl* and I eventually found the filthy man and he was begging for his life with tears in his eyes.
But Supergirl delivered the fatal blow and Krem fell dead to the ground before I could get it out.
And so it remains a mystery to this day.
But I am riding ahead of myself, as I tend to do but should not.



Allow me, then, to continue on the more traditional path of storytelling to better illuminate our beginnings in order that you might understand our ends.
I am blessed by Crying Anne with six brothers, all of whom are elder to me.
And that evening at endsfeast they were all yelling mad at one another, each one with a plan of vengeance.
But having spent enough of my days watching pygs squabble over their own castles of mud, I knew what was show and what was not.
It was a noble sort of bluster, but nonetheless each of them understood the outcome before a voice had been raised.
Krem of the Yellow Hills was likely a kingsagent sent here to test us, for even in the plains where the king is loved, there may be doubters.
As our cherished father had aptly demonstrated, offending a kingsagent was the start of a quick journey to the grave.
Better to whine and buck at the farm than to leave and have your head spiked, so whine and buck they did.
And when they were done, all agreed that everything should be left to the Divine.
They would stay here and tend to the rocks.


I, however...
AND MAY I ASK WHERE YOU ARE GOING IN THE MIDST OF THE FINE MOONLIGHT, RUTHYE, MY DARLING ONE?
I DID NOT EXPECT TO SEE YOU, MOTHER.
I HOPE THAT THE DEATH OF MY FATHER HAS NOT CAUSED YOU POOR DREAMS.
YOU ARE A MITE YOUNG TO BE SEEKING THROUGH THE WORLD HOPING FOR BLOOD.
MAYBE YOU SHOULD LISTEN TO YOUR BROTHERS AND SIT AND WAIT FOR AMENDS TO COME.
HM.
IF I WAS GOING TO SIT AND WAIT FOR THE IMPOSSIBLE, I'D SIT AND WAIT FOR DADDY TO RISE UP FROM OUR GOOD SOD AND HOLD ME ONCE AGAIN.
BUT I AM NOT INCLINED IN THAT DIRECTION.
WELL.
TAKE YOUR LATE FATHER'S MOUNT.
HE'S AN ORNERY ONE AND I DON'T FEEL LIKE CARING FOR HIM. I GOT ENOUGH TROUBLES.


DC Comics Presents:
Supergirl: Woman of Tomorrow
I confess, I had not ever left the confines of our hearth before and I would have expected to be full of fear and caution that night.
But in truth, all that existed within me was anger.
An anger at the thousand fates for allowing Krem to kill my father.
And an anger at myself for not yet having brought that degenerate scruff to his knees.
Chapter One: "Men, Women, and Dogs"
Tom King -- Writer
Bilquis Evely -- Artist
Matheus Lopes -- Colorist
Clayton Cowles -- Letterer
Evely & Lopes -- Cover
Gary Frank & Alex Sinclair-- Variant Cover
Brittany Holzherr & Jamie S. Rich -- Editors
Supergirl based on the characters created by Jerry Siegel & Joe Shuster. By special arrangement with the Jerry Siegel Family.


SO. YOU'VE TRACKED A KINGSAGENT ACROSS THE PLAINS TO HERE--TO THE WHALETOWER.
AND YOU NEED SOMEONE TO TOTE YOU OVER THOSE MIGHTY BARACADES AND HELP YOU KILL THE POOR OX.
EVEN IF IT WAS FEASIBLE, WOULDN'T BE CHEAP.
I DID NOT COME TO YOU BECAUSE I THOUGHT YOU WOULD BE CHEAP.
I CAME TO YOU, SIR, BECAUSE GOOD FOLKS TELL ME YOU ARE THE MOST RUTHLESS BOUNTY INSIDE THE CITY WALLS.
AND I HAVE NEED OF A RUTHLESS MAN.
SEE HERE.
IF YOU EXAMINE THIS SWORD YOU WILL FIND IT OF HIGH QUALITY AND WORTH.
AS I HAVE TRAVELED, MANY WELL-PRACTICED SMITHS HAVE OFFERED ME THE SKY FOR IT, BUT I HAVE NO NEED FOR THE SKY.
NO.
YOU HAVE NEED FOR A RUTHLESS MAN.
THE BLADE WILL BE PROVIDED TO YOU WHEN I WITNESS THE DEATH OF KREM OF THE YELLOW HILLS.
WHETHER THAT IS TO YOUR SATISFACTION OR NOT, I WOULD APPRECIATE A REPLY AS RAPIDLY AS YOU ARE ABLE.
FOR EVERY MOMENT THAT PASSES THAT KREM BREATHES THE AIR ABOVE PAINS ME, LIKE A WOUND THAT WILL NOT HEAL.


THEN LET US SAY IT IS AGREED, BUT NOT EXACTLY ON YOUR TERMS, CHILD.
I WILL TAKE THE WEAPON--IT IS QUITE LOVELY--AND I WILL GET YOUR MAN, BY MY WORD.
YOU'LL RETURN HOME, GLAD IN THE KNOWING THAT YOUR WOUND HAS BEEN SEEN BY AN EXPERT AND TREATED WITH BOTH COMPASSION AND GRACE.
SIR.
YOU ARE UNINTELLIGENTLY MISTAKEN IN PRESUMING AN INVITE TO A NEGOTIATION WHEN NO SUCH OFFER HAS BEEN PROFFERED.
IF YOU RETURN MY SWORD, I WILL EXPLAIN TO YOU THE NEED FOR THE SPECIFICS OF MY PROPOSAL AND WHY COMPROMISE IS ENTIRELY UNWORKABLE.
FROM YOUR SPEAKING I SEE YOU'RE WELL EDUCATED FOR A YOUNG ONE FROM THE PLAINS.
BUT LET ME GIVE YOU ONE ADDITIONAL, RATHER VITAL LESSON THAT PERHAPS YOUR TEACHERS HAVE NOT YET COVERED.
PLEASE, LISTEN CLOSE.
SLAP
NOW REMEMBER THAT.
AND DON'T WORRY NONE WHILE YOU'RE REMEMBERING.
YOUR KINGSAGENT WILL SUFFER AT MY FEET.

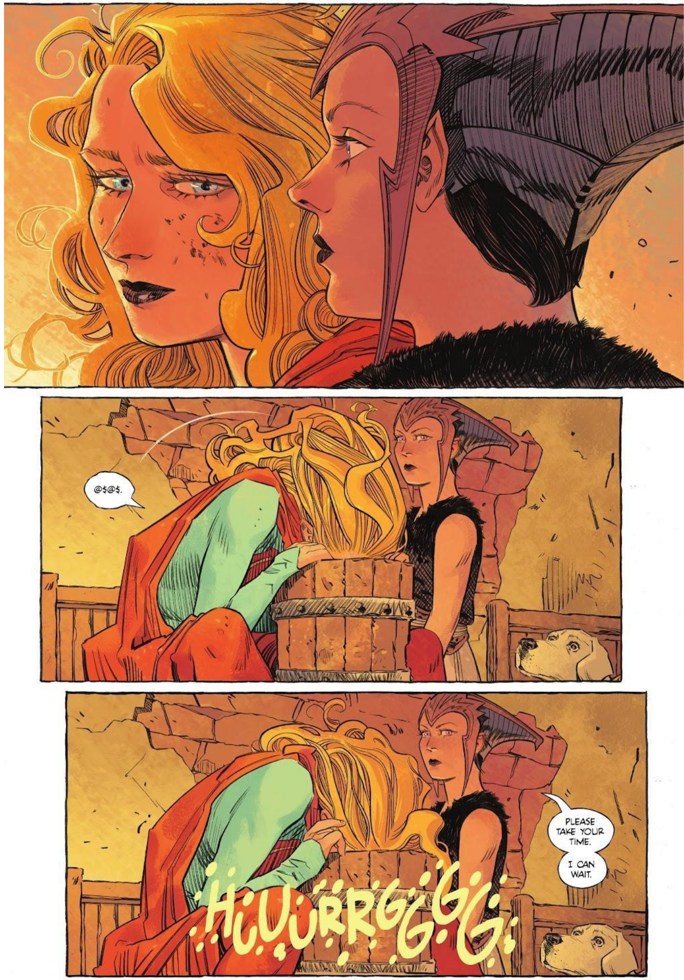

WAIT, WAIT, STOP.
HHM?
BY XRYM!
HAVE I BEEN UNINFORMED? IS TODAY THE FESTIVAL OF IMPERTINENT FEMALES?
REMOVE YOUR HAND, OR I SHALL REMOVE YOUR FINGERS.
WHAT? NO... JUST STOP FOR A SECOND.
LOOK, I'M GOING TO TAKE THE SWORD AND GIVE IT BACK TO...THIS...HER...
AND YOU JUST...GO AWAY, OKAY, AND WE WON'T FIGHT BECAUSE IT'S MY BIRTHDAY.
I HAVE NEITHER TIME NOR PATIENCE FOR FOOLERY.
IF YOU HAVE GODS, PERHAPS TAKE A MOMENT TO EXPRESS YOUR RESPECT FOR THEIR BENEVOLENCE.
AS YOU SHALL SOON BE MEETING THEM EYE TO EYE.
DON'T BE MAD. I'M 21 NOW. OFFICIAL.
WHICH MEANS IT'S OKAY.
THAT'S THE TRUTH AND THE JUSTICE AND THE AMERICAN WAY.

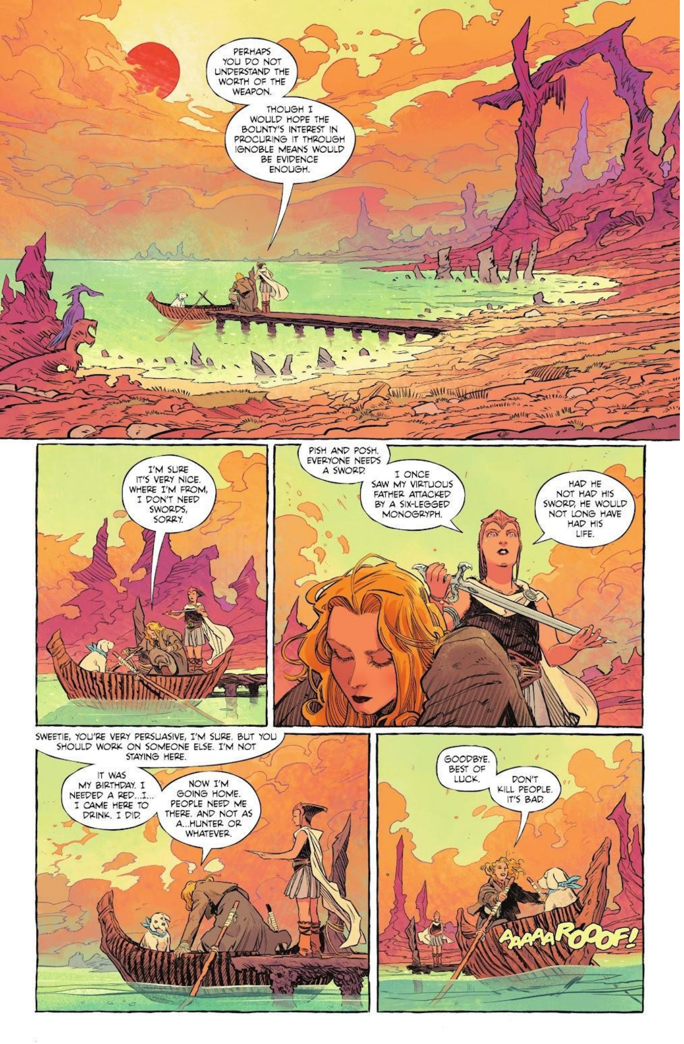

YOU HAVE HAD YOUR WARNING!
NO, DON'T DO THAT.
THAT'S STUPID.
SHINK
NOW I SHALL HAVE YOUR BLOOD!
RIPPPP
$$%@, YOU'RE STILL DOING IT.
STOP! STOP! JUST WAIT A MINUTE! GOD! PLEASE!
A SURRENDER? WISE. PERHAPS YOU DO NOT WISH TO GREET YOUR LORDS THIS DAY.
NO. NO, NO, I JUST DON'T WANT TO WASTE ANY OF THIS...STUFF YOU GOT.
BECAUSE I DON'T HAVE ANY MORE OF YOUR WEIRD COINS.
AND I DON'T STEAL. 'CAUSE IT'S WRONG. EVEN IF IT'S MY BIRTHDAY. AND I DESERVE IT.
WHAT IS THIS MADNESS?
OKAY, OKAY, IT'S DONE.
YOU CAN KEEP GOING. BUT, Y'KNOW, IT'S PROBABLY GOING TO HURT.
YOU.

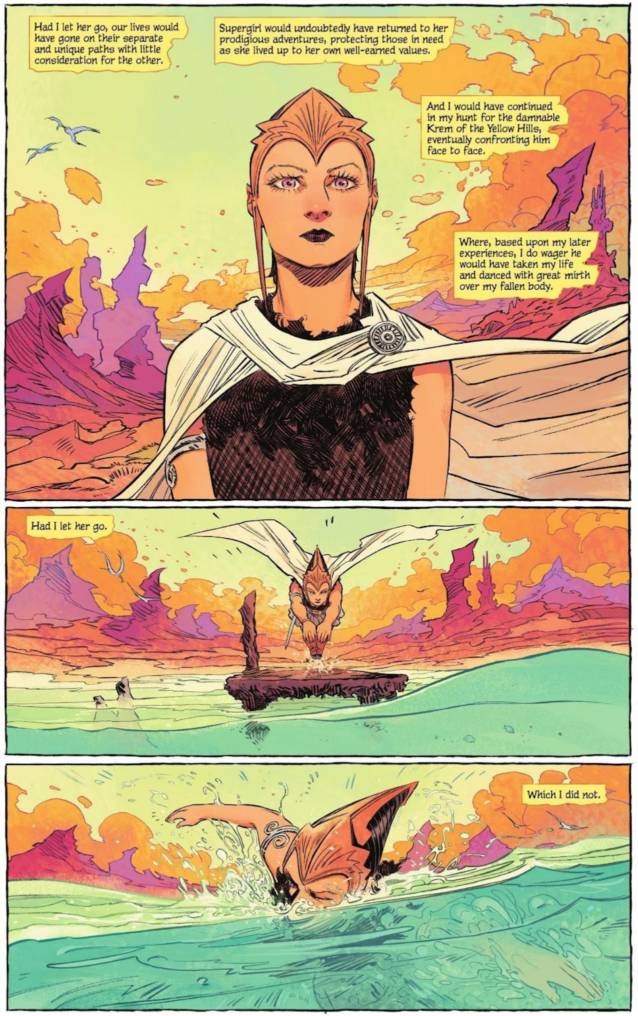

CRASH
YOU... DARE...
OW! @%$@!
NNN, FORGOT THE STUPID RED SUN... I HAVE TO HURT TOO...
HEH. THAT IS ONLY THE BEGINNING OF YOUR PAIN.
FOR I WILL NOT BE TURNED BUFFOON BY...
...SOME...
KKKRASSSHHH


...WOMAN...
ARRROOOOF!

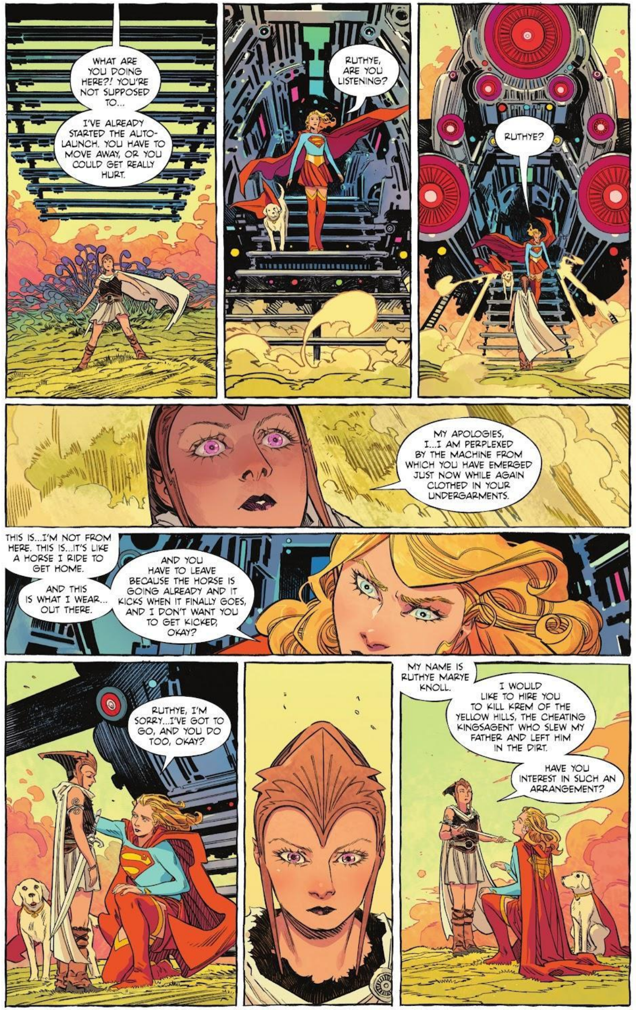

@&#$.
YOU SPEAK OFTEN OF THIS "@%$@," ESPECIALLY WHEN YOUR AGONY BECOMES ACUTE.
THIS IS YOUR HUSBAND?
I'M GOING TO THROW UP.
SORRY.
YOU MAY GIVE IT YOUR BEST EFFORT.
BUT IT SEEMS TO ME YOU MUST HAVE EXPURGATED ANY FOODSTUFFS YOU HAD BEEN CARRYING BY NOW.
I WASN'T WEARING THIS.
YOU'RE NOT SUPPOSED TO SEE IT.
THOUGH I HAVE BEEN RAISED IN THE COMPANY OF SIX BROTHERS, I AM NOT UNACCUSTOMED TO OTHER WOMEN'S UNDERGARMENTS.
THOUGH I CONCEDE YOURS ARE CERTAINLY UNIQUE IN THEIR COLOR AND ORNAMENT.
HERE, I HAVE CLEANED THE FLOOR ENOUGH.
WAIT...
WHO ARE YOU?
I AM RUTHYE MARYE KNOLL. AND I AM WITNESS TO YOUR SKILL AND BRAVERY.
I WOULD LIKE TO HIRE YOU TO KILL KREM OF THE YELLOW HILLS, THE CHEATING KINGSAGENT WHO SLEW MY FATHER AND LEFT HIM IN THE DIRT.
HAVE YOU INTEREST IN SUCH AN ARRANGEMENT?


@$@$.
PLEASE TAKE YOUR TIME.
I CAN WAIT.
HUURRGGG

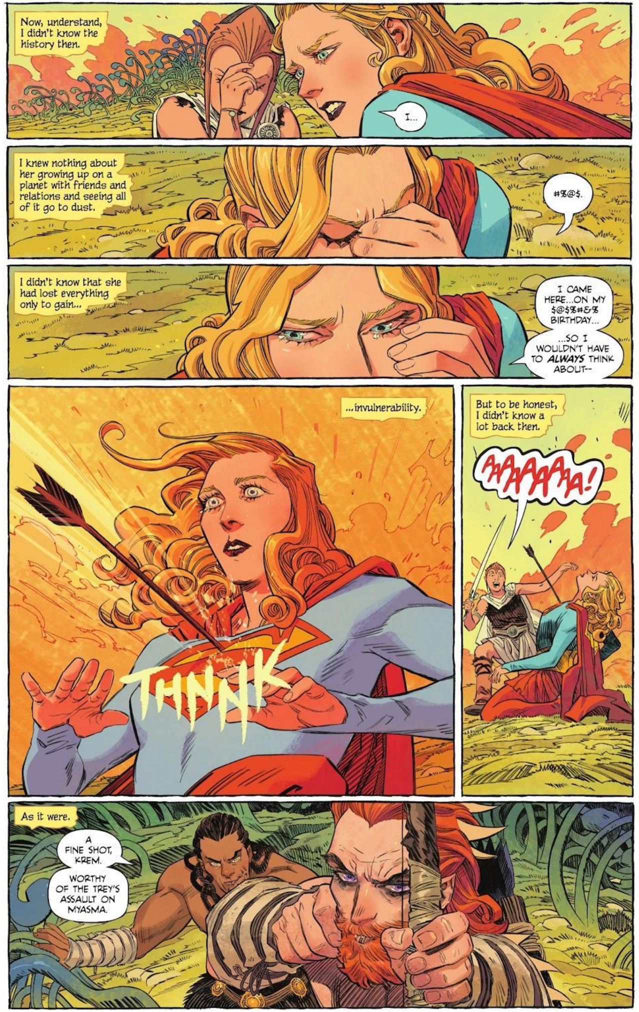

PERHAPS YOU DO NOT UNDERSTAND THE WORTH OF THE WEAPON.
THOUGH I WOULD HOPE THE BOUNTY'S INTEREST IN PROCURING IT THROUGH IGNOBLE MEANS WOULD BE EVIDENCE ENOUGH.
I'M SURE IT'S VERY NICE. WHERE I'M FROM, I DON'T NEED SWORDS, SORRY.
PISH AND POSH. EVERYONE NEEDS A SWORD.
I ONCE SAW MY VIRTUOUS FATHER ATTACKED BY A SIX-LEGGED MONOGRYPH.
HAD HE NOT HAD HIS SWORD, HE WOULD NOT LONG HAVE HAD HIS LIFE.
SWEETIE, YOU'RE VERY PERSUASIVE, I'M SURE. BUT YOU SHOULD WORK ON SOMEONE ELSE. I'M NOT STAYING HERE.
IT WAS MY BIRTHDAY. I NEEDED A RED...I... I CAME HERE TO DRINK. I DID.
NOW I'M GOING HOME. PEOPLE NEED ME THERE. AND NOT AS A...HUNTER OR WHATEVER.
GOODBYE. BEST OF LUCK.
DON'T KILL PEOPLE. IT'S BAD.
AAAAAROOOF!

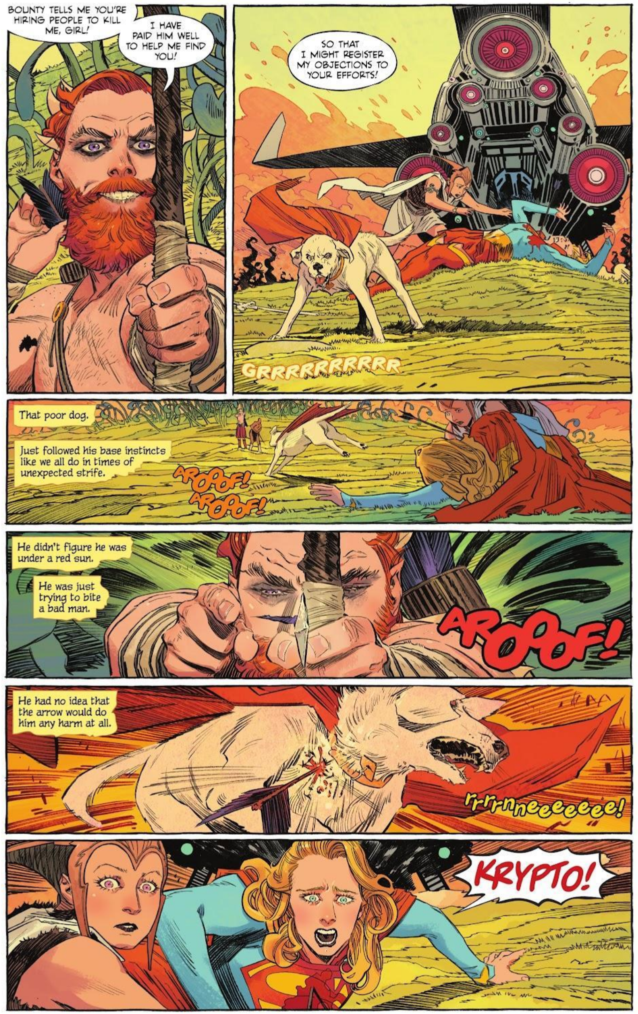

Had I let her go, our lives would have gone on their separate and unique paths with little consideration for the other.
Supergirl would undoubtedly have returned to her prodigious adventures, protecting those in need as she lived up to her own well-earned values.
And I would have continued in my hunt for the damnable Krem of the Yellow Hills, eventually confronting him face to face.
Where, based upon my later experiences, I do wager he would have taken my life and danced with great mirth over my fallen body.
Had I let her go.
Which I did not.


As I went, I could feel the jawedones nipping at my skin, testing and tasting.
Fortunately, they are a fearful lot this close to shore and my motion in the swim was enough to convince them to hold off a swarm.
Tuckered out, I'd be an easier meal, which was all the motivation I needed to keep my arms and legs pumping.
The most cumbersome obstacle was Krem's sword hanging heavy from my belt, dragging against the sea as I pushed forward.
I was tempted on a number of occasions to release the weapon and allow it to descend peacefully into the deep blue.
But I managed to remind myself each time that it held my father's last blood, and the seafloor was not its capping destination.
Eventually and thankfully I reached the shore.
The burn and scratch of the sand on my feet felt like a baptism, and I welcomed it as a babe welcomes the smile of a kindly priest.
Now, I am quiet, but I am not silent.
Under a yellow sun, Supergirl surely would have heard me coming and begged me off.
But, at that time she was deprived of the senses that provoke envy among gods.
And I was able to track her back to what I can only describe as...
...the indescribable.


WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?! YOU'RE NOT SUPPOSED TO...
I'VE ALREADY STARTED THE AUTO-LAUNCH. YOU HAVE TO MOVE AWAY, OR YOU COULD GET REALLY HURT.
RUTHYE, ARE YOU LISTENING?
RUTHYE?
MY APOLOGIES, I...I AM PERPLEXED BY THE MACHINE FROM WHICH YOU HAVE EMERGED JUST NOW WHILE AGAIN CLOTHED IN YOUR UNDERGARMENTS.
THIS IS...I'M NOT FROM HERE. THIS IS...IT'S LIKE A HORSE I RIDE TO GET HOME.
AND THIS IS WHAT I WEAR... OUT THERE.
AND YOU HAVE TO LEAVE BECAUSE THE HORSE IS GOING ALREADY AND IT KICKS WHEN IT FINALLY GOES, AND I DON'T WANT YOU TO GET KICKED, OKAY?
RUTHYE, I'M SORRY...I'VE GOT TO GO, AND YOU DO TOO, OKAY?
MY NAME IS RUTHYE MARYE KNOLL.
I WOULD LIKE TO HIRE YOU TO KILL KREM OF THE YELLOW HILLS, THE CHEATING KINGSAGENT WHO SLEW MY FATHER AND LEFT HIM IN THE DIRT.
HAVE YOU INTEREST IN SUCH AN ARRANGEMENT?

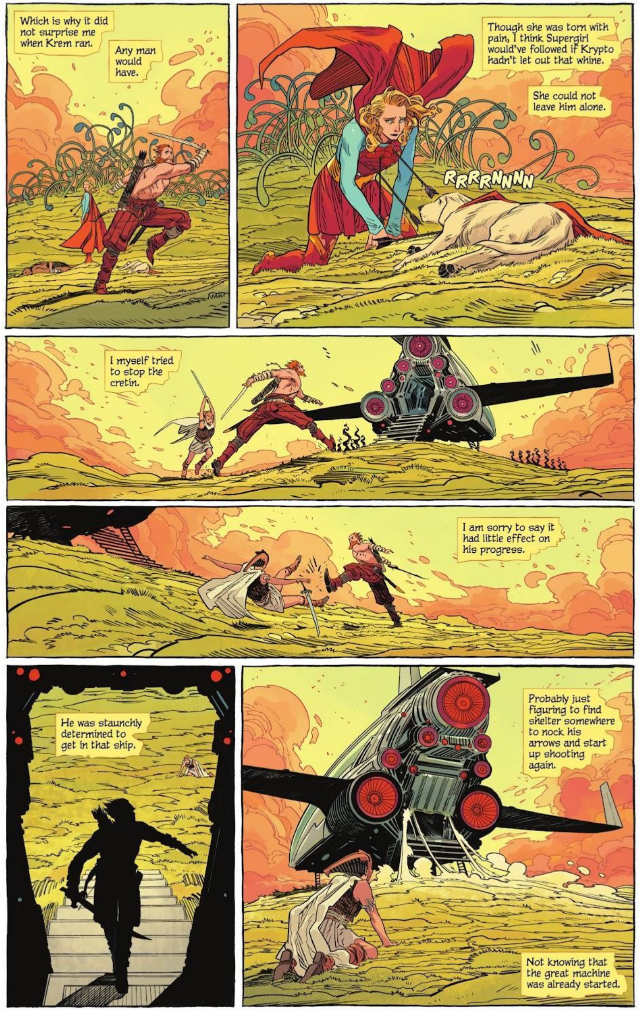

<SIGH> YOU SEEM LIKE A VERY NICE GIRL, BUT I CAN'T GO WITH YOU TO GO OFF AND KILL SOMEONE.
YOU DON'T KNOW THIS ABOUT ME, BUT I HAVE A JOB, A VERY RESPONSIBLE JOB THAT I NEED TO GO BACK HOME TO DO.
AND THE FIRST RULE OF THAT JOB JUST HAPPENS TO BE "DON'T KILL PEOPLE."
LOOK, I UNDERSTAND YOUR ANGER. IT'S HARD TO LOSE SOMEBODY.
BUT YOU HAVE TO LOOK FOR *JUSTICE,* NOT VENGEANCE.
Y'KNOW, IT'S LIKE MY MOTHER SAID--LIFE IS ABOUT COMPASSION, NOT FURY.
YOU UNDERSTAND?
YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND A DAMNED THING!
I DIDN'T LOSE SOMEBODY, I LOST MY BLESSED FATHER, WHO WAS MY HEART!
I WILL NEVER SEE HIM AGAIN, NOT ON MY BRIDAL DAY OR ANY OTHER. HE'S GONE!
ALL THAT FLIGHTY TALK OF COMPASSION AND FURY!
THAT'S DANDY IF YOU'RE LIVING ON GROUND YOU KNOW WILL STAND SOLID!
BUT I LOST MY WORLD!


Now, understand, I didn't know the history then.
I...
I knew nothing about her growing up on a planet with friends and relations and seeing all of it go to dust.
#%@$.
I didn't know that she had lost everything only to gain...
I CAME HERE...ON MY $@$%#&% BIRTHDAY...
...SO I WOULDN'T HAVE TO *ALWAYS* THINK ABOUT--
...invulnerability.
THNNK
But to be honest, I didn't know a lot back then.
AAAAAAAA!
As it were.
A FINE SHOT, KREM.
WORTHY OF THE TREY'S ASSAULT ON MYASMA.


BOUNTY TELLS ME YOU'RE HIRING PEOPLE TO KILL ME, GIRL!
I HAVE PAID HIM WELL TO HELP ME FIND YOU!
SO THAT I MIGHT REGISTER MY OBJECTIONS TO YOUR EFFORTS!
GRRRRRRRRRR
That poor dog.
Just followed his base instincts like we all do in times of unexpected strife.
AROOOF! AROOOF!
He didn't figure he was under a red sun.
He was just trying to bite a bad man.
AROOOF!
He had no idea that the arrow would do him any harm at all.
r-r-rnneeeeeee!
KRYPTO!

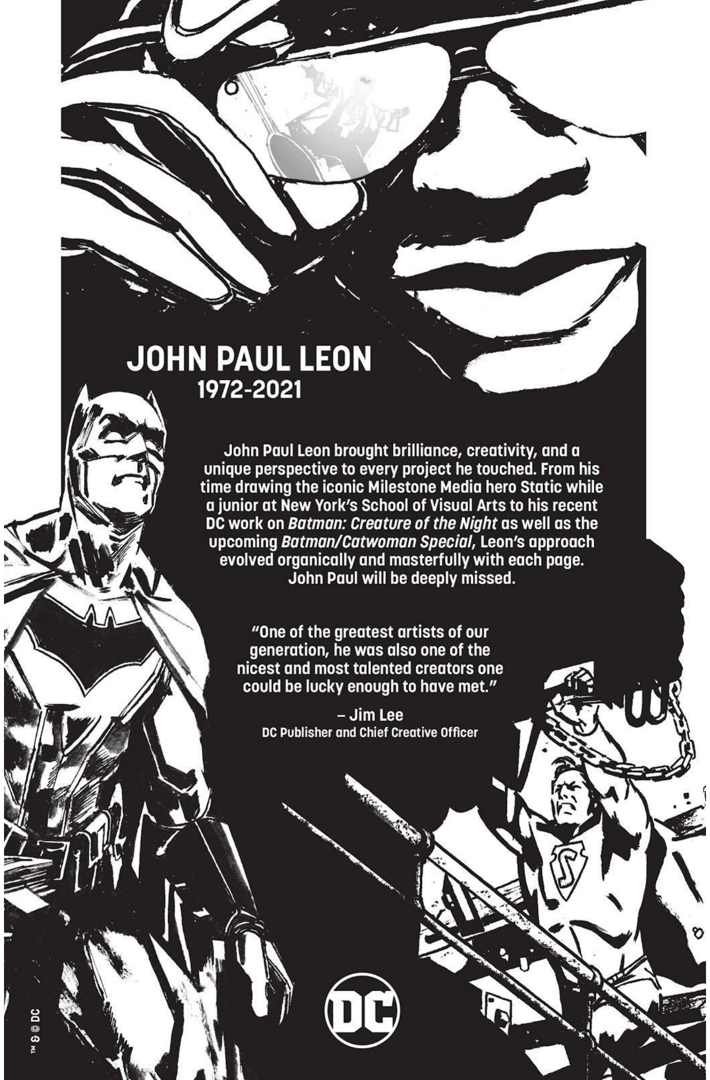

I THOUGHT I HAD HER ON THE FIRST SHOT. COULD'VE SWORN.
AH, WELL.
ARROWS?
SWORDS AND ARROWS?
FNNNT
HM.
DO YOU THINK SHE HAS ANY IDEA OF THE COST OF THIS EQUIPMENT? BY SOL, I PRAY THAT THERE IS COIN ON HER BODY.
DON'T YOU EVEN KNOW WHO I AM?
FNNNT
I'M SUPERGIRL.
DO YOU THINK I GIVE A $#%% ABOUT SWORDS AND ARROWS?!


I was not as uninitiated to battles as you might assume due to my youth and the gentle reputation of my gender.
There were thieves and robbers on the plain and I saw them scrap mightily with my dear father and brothers.
I've seen many a time when two men were convinced only one of them would emerge from their baneful conflagration.
But until that day, I never saw anyone so unafraid of death that they understood in their heart and belly a simple and perfect truth--
There was no one alive stronger than they.

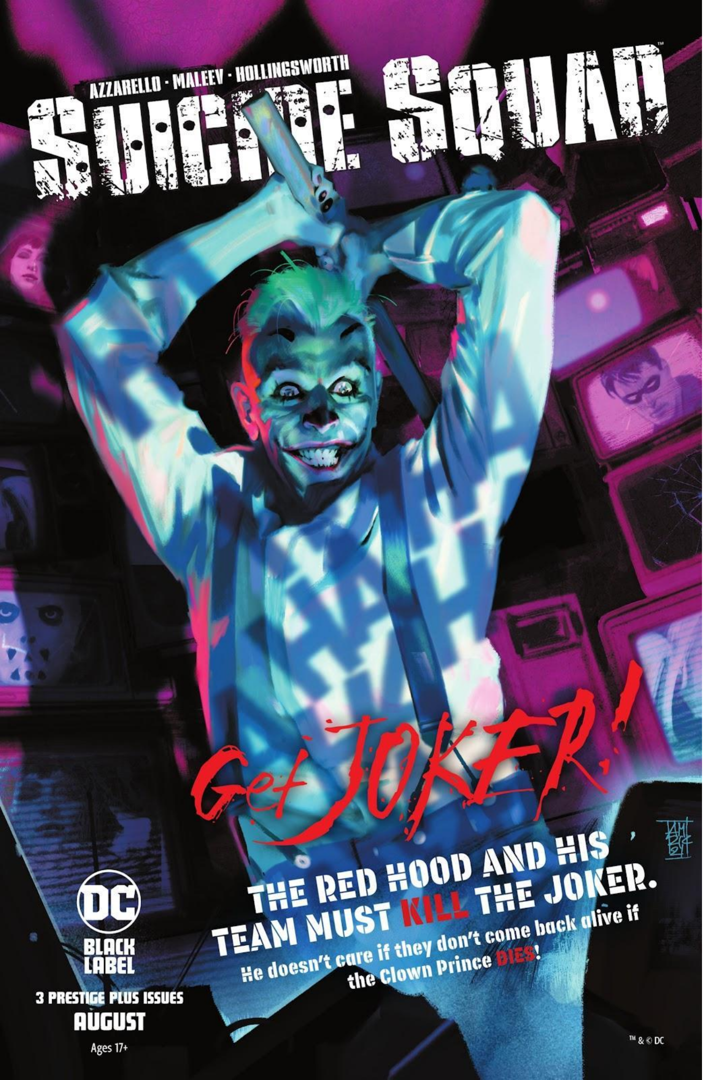

Which is why it did not surprise me when Krem ran.
Any man would have.
Though she was torn with pain, I think Supergirl would've followed if Krypto hadn't let out that whine.
She could not leave him alone.
RRRRNNNN
I myself tried to stop the cretin.
I am sorry to say it had little effect on his progress.
He was staunchly determined to get in that ship.
Probably just figuring to find shelter somewhere to nock his arrows and start up shooting again.
Not knowing that the great machine was already started.



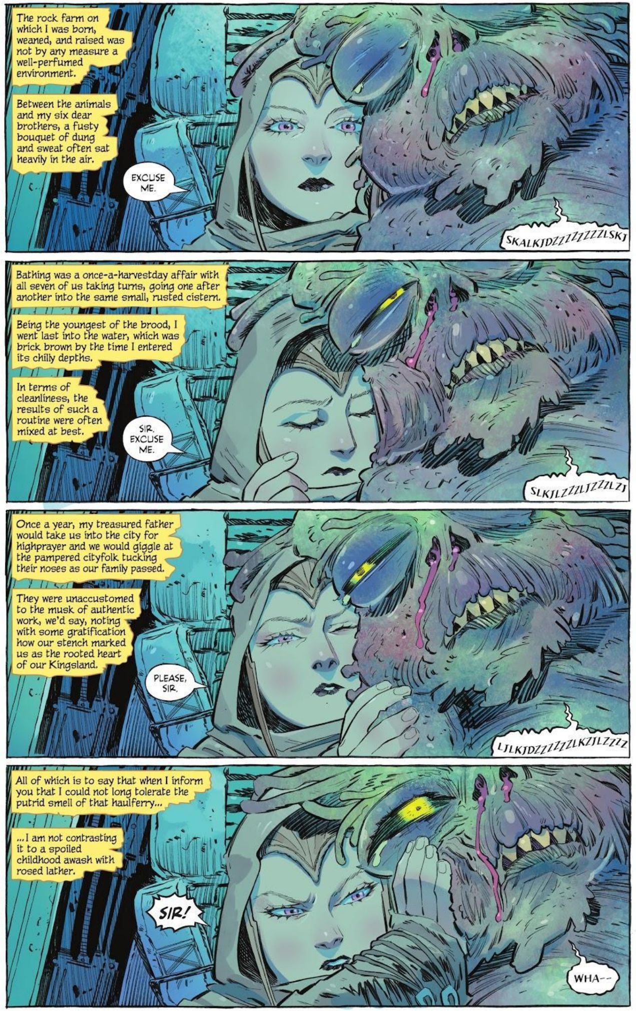
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JOHN PAUL LEON
1972-2021
John Paul Leon brought brilliance, creativity, and a unique perspective to every project he touched. From his time drawing the iconic Milestone Media hero Static while a junior at New York's School of Visual Arts to his recent DC work on *Batman: Creature of the Night* as well as the upcoming *Batman/Catwoman Special*, Leon's approach evolved organically and masterfully with each page. John Paul will be deeply missed.
"One of the greatest artists of our generation, he was also one of the nicest and most talented creators one could be lucky enough to have met."
– Jim Lee
DC Publisher and Chief Creative Officer
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DC
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WOMAN OF TOMORROW
2 of 8
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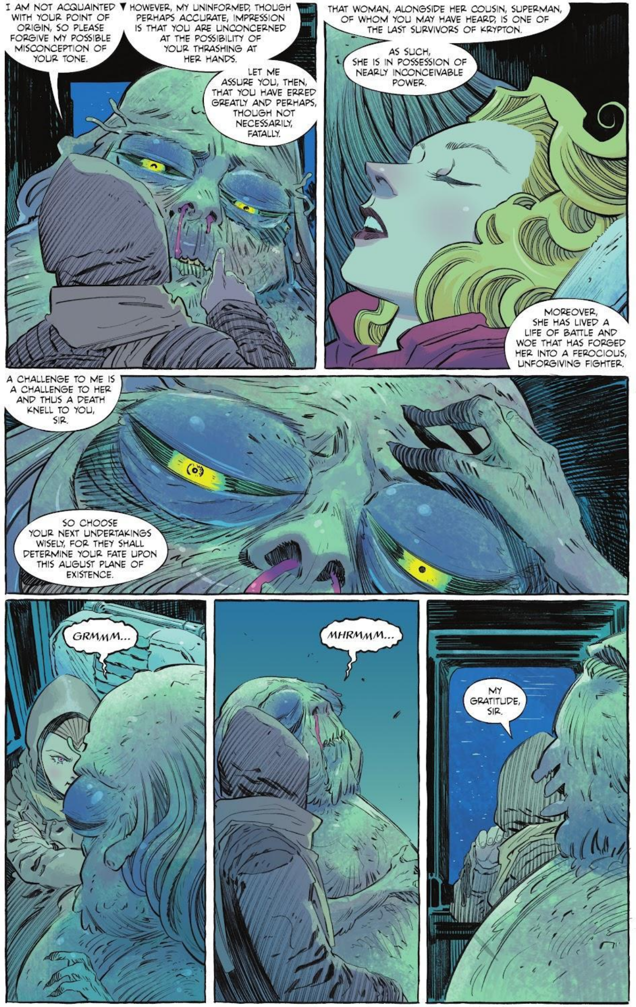
AZZARELLO · MALEEV · HOLLINGSWORTH
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THE RED HOOD AND HIS TEAM MUST KILL THE JOKER.
He doesn't care if they don't come back alive if the Clown Prince DIES!
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3 PRESTIGE PLUS ISSUES
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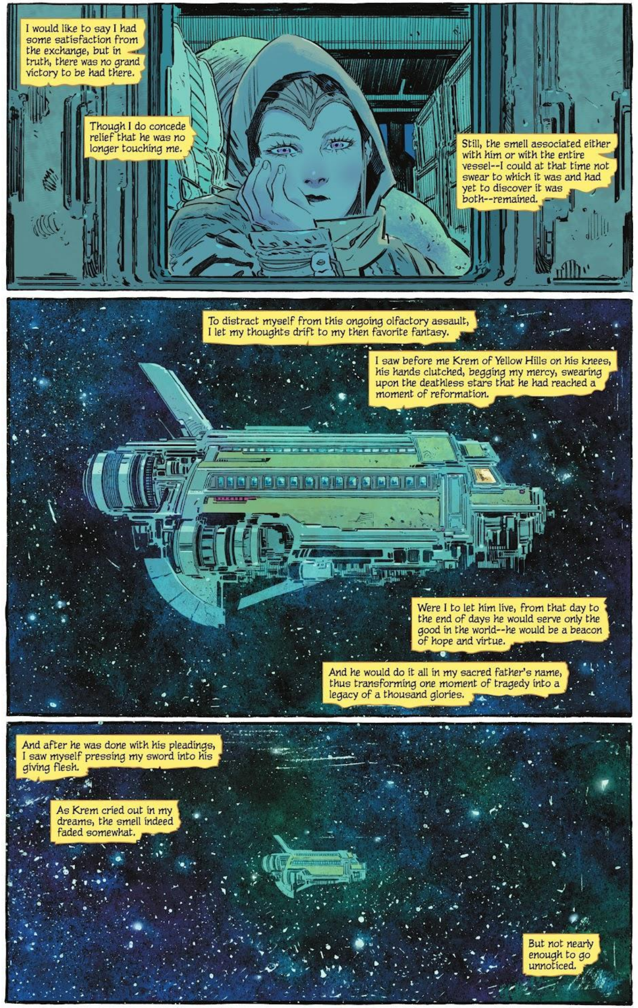


The rock farm on which I was born, weaned, and raised was not by any measure a well-perfumed environment.
Between the animals and my six dear brothers, a fusty bouquet of dung and sweat often sat heavily in the air.
EXCUSE ME.
SKALKJDZZZZZZZLSKJ
Bathing was a once-a-harvestday affair with all seven of us taking turns, going one after another into the same small, rusted cistern.
Being the youngest of the brood, I went last into the water, which was brick brown by the time I entered its chilly depths.
In terms of cleanliness, the results of such a routine were often mixed at best.
SIR. EXCUSE ME.
SLKJLZZZLJZZZLZJ
Once a year, my treasured father would take us into the city for highprayer and we would giggle at the pampered cityfolk tucking their noses as our family passed.
They were unaccustomed to the musk of authentic work, we'd say, noting with some gratification how our stench marked us as the rooted heart of our Kingsland.
PLEASE, SIR.
LJLKJDZZZZZZLKZJLZZZZ
All of which is to say that when I inform you that I could not long tolerate the putrid smell of that haulferry...
...I am not contrasting it to a spoiled childhood awash with rosed lather.
SIR!
WHA--

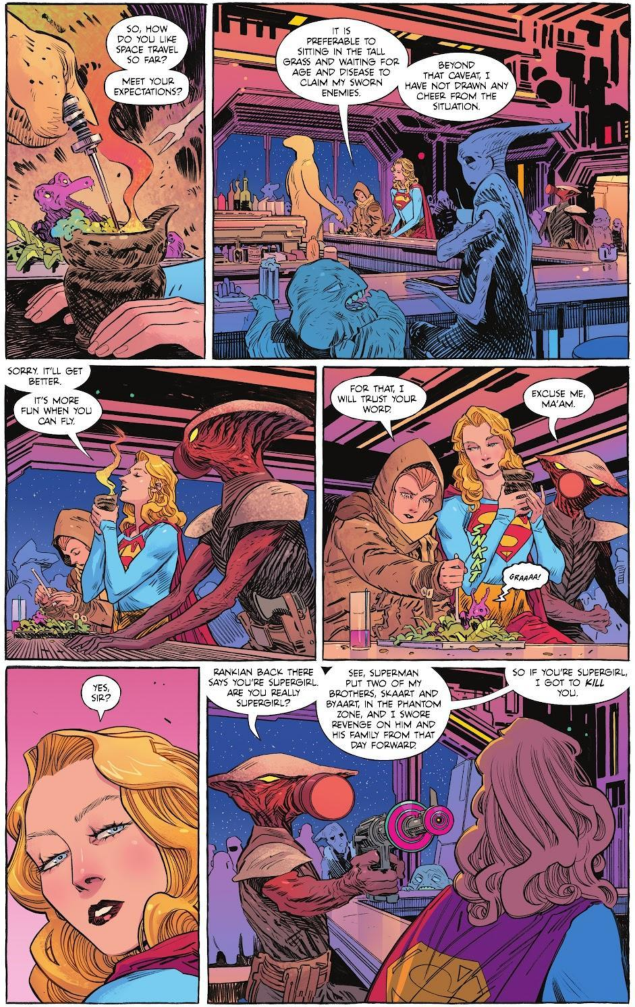

SIR, I AM EMBARKED UPON A LONG AND TUMULTUOUS JOURNEY, THE RESULTS OF WHICH WILL BE THE WORTHY DEATH OF AN UNWORTHY MAN.
AS THE FIRST STEPS IN THIS GREAT ENDEAVOR, I HAVE PURCHASED PASSAGE UPON THIS SEASONED BUT STURDY VESSEL.
AND IT IS MY UNDERSTANDING THAT THERE IS A CERTAIN AMOUNT OF SPACE THAT IS GUARANTEED WITH SAID PURCHASE.
BY PLACING YOUR HEAD UNINVITED UPON MY SHOULDER IN THE MANNER YOU HAVE, YOU ARE OBVIOUSLY VIOLATING THIS GUARANTEE.
IF YOU WISH TO CHALLENGE THAT PREMISE, I AM CONTENT TO HEAR YOUR ARGUMENTS.
BUT I WOULD INSIST ON YOU AIRING THEM STRAIGHTAWAY, AS I FEEL I HAVE ALREADY SUFFERED THROUGH HOURS OF NEEDLESS DISCOMFORT AND I WILL STAND IT NO MORE.
HMMM?

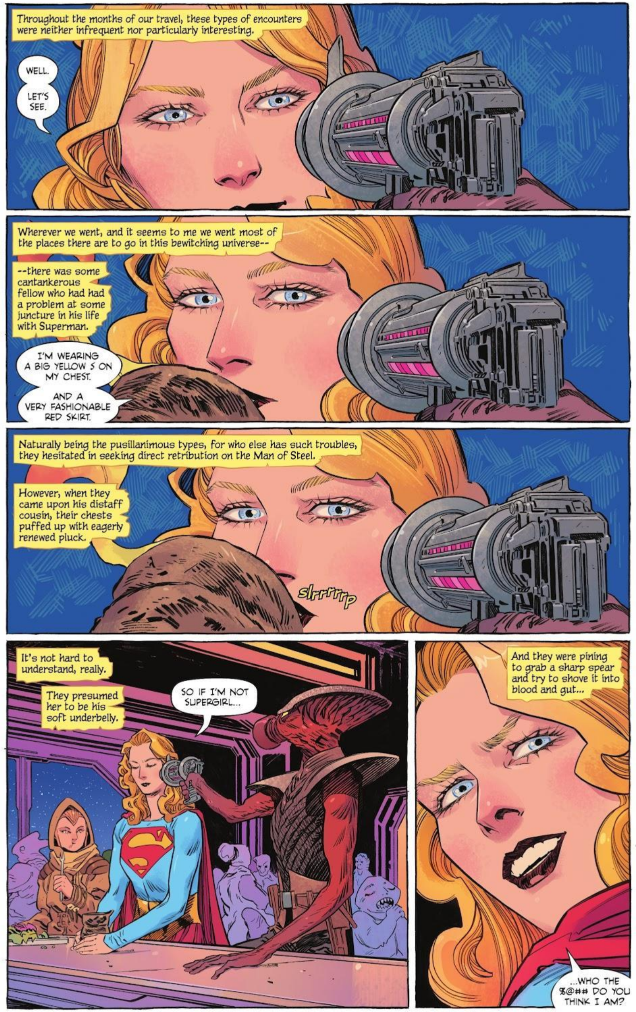

YOU... MMM...
YOU.
YOU'RE SMALL. MM.
ARE YOU TASTY?
FOR THE LIFE OF ME, I CANNOT FATHOM HOW MY SIZE AND PIQUANCY HAVE ANY RELATION TO THE DISPUTED MATTER AT HAND.
THOUGH I DO ASSURE YOU THAT ANY ATTEMPT TO CONSUME ME WILL RESULT IN YOUR HUMILIATED SURRENDER.
FOR I DO NOT TRAVEL ALONE, BUT AM ACCOMPANIED IN MY VENGEANCE-QUEST BY A WARRIOR WHOSE RENOWN ECHOES FROM ONE SIDE OF THE UNIVERSE TO THE OTHER.
THE MAID OF MIGHT. SUPERGIRL.
WHO IS CURRENTLY SEATED TO YOUR OPPOSITE SIDE.
GNNZZZZZZZ...
WHO, HER?


I AM NOT ACQUAINTED WITH YOUR POINT OF ORIGIN, SO PLEASE FORGIVE MY POSSIBLE MISCONCEPTION OF YOUR TONE.
HOWEVER, MY UNINFORMED, THOUGH PERHAPS ACCURATE, IMPRESSION IS THAT YOU ARE UNCONCERNED AT THE POSSIBILITY OF YOUR THRASHING AT HER HANDS.
LET ME ASSURE YOU, THEN, THAT YOU HAVE ERRED GREATLY AND PERHAPS, THOUGH NOT NECESSARILY, FATALLY.
THAT WOMAN, ALONGSIDE HER COUSIN, SUPERMAN, OF WHOM YOU MAY HAVE HEARD, IS ONE OF THE LAST SURVIVORS OF KRYPTON.
AS SUCH, SHE IS IN POSSESSION OF NEARLY INCONCEIVABLE POWER.
MOREOVER, SHE HAS LIVED A LIFE OF BATTLE AND WOE THAT HAS FORGED HER INTO A FEROCIOUS, UNFORGIVING FIGHTER.
A CHALLENGE TO ME IS A CHALLENGE TO HER AND THUS A DEATH KNELL TO YOU, SIR.
SO CHOOSE YOUR NEXT UNDERTAKINGS WISELY, FOR THEY SHALL DETERMINE YOUR FATE UPON THIS AUGUST PLANE OF EXISTENCE.
GRMMM...
MHRMMM...
MY GRATITUDE, SIR.


I would like to say I had some satisfaction from the exchange, but in truth, there was no grand victory to be had there.
Though I do concede relief that he was no longer touching me.
Still, the smell associated either with him or with the entire vessel--I could at that time not swear to which it was and had yet to discover it was both--remained.
To distract myself from this ongoing olfactory assault, I let my thoughts drift to my then favorite fantasy.
I saw before me Krem of Yellow Hills on his knees, his hands clutched, begging my mercy, swearing upon the deathless stars that he had reached a moment of reformation.
Were I to let him live, from that day to the end of days he would serve only the good in the world--he would be a beacon of hope and virtue.
And he would do it all in my sacred father's name, thus transforming one moment of tragedy into a legacy of a thousand glories.
And after he was done with his pleadings, I saw myself pressing my sword into his giving flesh.
As Krem cried out in my dreams, the smell indeed faded somewhat.
But not nearly enough to go unnoticed.


ANDMURPH'S ASTEROID! FIFTEEN-ZERMIT STOP! IF YOU ARE NOT BACK ON BOARD IN FIFTEEN ZERMITS, WE WILL NOT WAIT FOR YOU!
MMM.
CAN YOU FEEL IT, RUTHYE?
WE'RE GETTING CLOSER. THE STARS ARE CHANGING.
FIFTEEN-ZERMIT STOP! IF YOU MISS THE RIDE, NEXT HAULFERRY IS FORTY LIGHT-YEARS BEHIND THIS ONE!
ARE THEY?
THEY SEEM TO ME AS THEY ALWAYS WERE, DESPITE OUR MANY DAYS OF TRAVEL.
THEY REMAIN DISTANT.
ANDMURPH'S ASTEROID! FIFTEEN-ZERMIT STOP! IF YOU ARE NOT BACK ON BOARD IN FIFTEEN ZERMITS, WE WILL NOT WAIT FOR YOU!
C'MON, LET'S GET SOMETHING TO EAT. IT'LL BE A WHILE BEFORE WE STOP AGAIN.
FIFTEEN-ZERMIT STOP! IF YOU MISS THE RIDE, NEXT HAULFERRY IS FORTY LIGHT-YEARS BEHIND THIS ONE!
Not for the last time, I followed her faithfully.
After that filthy ride I did not feel even a mite peckish, but I recognized the need to repair and refresh before sojourning onward.


SO, HOW DO YOU LIKE SPACE TRAVEL SO FAR?
MEET YOUR EXPECTATIONS?
IT IS PREFERABLE TO SITTING IN THE TALL GRASS AND WAITING FOR AGE AND DISEASE TO CLAIM MY SWORN ENEMIES.
BEYOND THAT CAVEAT, I HAVE NOT DRAWN ANY CHEER FROM THE SITUATION.
SORRY. IT'LL GET BETTER.
IT'S MORE FUN WHEN YOU CAN FLY.
FOR THAT, I WILL TRUST YOUR WORD.
EXCUSE ME, MA'AM.
SNKKT
GRAAAA!
YES, SIR?
RANKIAN BACK THERE SAYS YOU'RE SUPERGIRL. ARE YOU REALLY SUPERGIRL?
SEE, SUPERMAN PUT TWO OF MY BROTHERS, SKAART AND BYAART, IN THE PHANTOM ZONE, AND I SWORE REVENGE ON HIM AND HIS FAMILY FROM THAT DAY FORWARD.
SO IF YOU'RE SUPERGIRL, I GOT TO KILL YOU.


Throughout the months of our travel, these types of encounters were neither infrequent nor particularly interesting.
WELL.
LET'S SEE.
Wherever we went, and it seems to me we went most of the places there are to go in this bewitching universe--
--there was some cantankerous fellow who had had a problem at some juncture in his life with Superman.
I'M WEARING A BIG YELLOW S ON MY CHEST.
AND A VERY FASHIONABLE RED SKIRT.
Naturally being the pusillanimous types, for who else has such troubles, they hesitated in seeking direct retribution on the Man of Steel.
However, when they came upon his distaff cousin, their chests puffed up with eagerly renewed pluck.
slrrrrrp
It's not hard to understand, really.
They presumed her to be his soft underbelly.
SO IF I'M NOT SUPERGIRL...
And they were pining to grab a sharp spear and try to shove it into blood and gut...
...WHO THE %@## DO YOU THINK I AM?

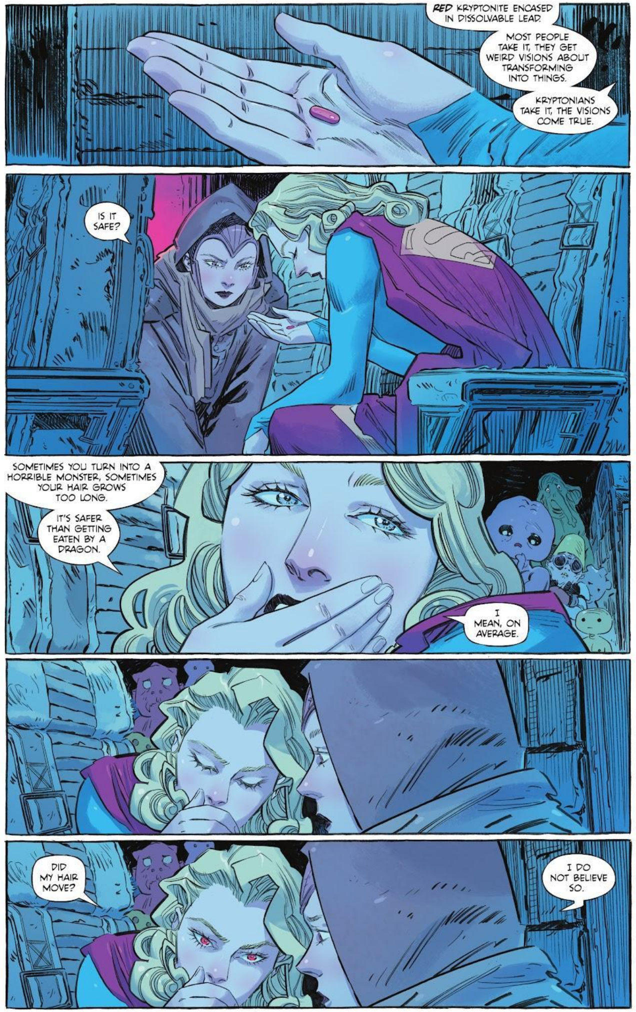

Now, I spent enough time around Supergirl to know her better than most, maybe better than all, if truth be told.
So let me say with some manner of expertise that she was a woman of disparate qualities who bent her own sense of self to fit the situation.
Which is to say in a simpler manner--
It is true. She was many things to many people.
KRACKK
CRUNNK
But she was never soft.
KRASSH


Going forward, I will omit the majority of these incidences for fear my prose would grow repetitive and thus stale.
HOW MANY ZERMITS HAS IT BEEN?
I proffer this one here only as an example of the form.
I DON'T FANCY TO KNOW WHAT A ZERMIT IS.
I encourage you as you read on to imagine many more such examples between the pages marked here.
YEAH, ME NEITHER.
This will better fit the situation to which I bore witness all those years ago.
SO WE BETTER GET GOING.
MY BROTHERS...
When I was young and hopeful and assumed the world eternally just.
DON'T WANT TO GET STUCK HERE.
CRAKK


We continued on and the weeks passed in much the same fashion.
Our dual enemies of tedium and malodor were met each hour and if not outright defeated, at least occasionally brought to bay.
I must admit, betwixt the two of us very little conversation was to be had.
We knew our destination, we knew we were engaged in a test of endurance, and we did not wish to amplify the situation by commenting upon it.
Or at least that was my assumption at the time.
Eventually we became accustomed to the routine and were both shocked when during a stop at the Novox rest station the driver paged Supergirl and begged for her help.
"We're all going to die," he said with no intention of hyperbole.


IT'S A DRAGON.
IT'S A *KARPANE* DRAGON. THEY PATROL THE WEST GALAXIES EATING ANYTHING METAL.
BUT THESE ARE THE EAST GALAXIES. THEY'RE NOT SUPPOSED TO BE IN THIS SECTOR THIS TIME OF THE YEAR! I'VE DRIVEN THIS ROUTE THREE EONS AND NEVER SEEN ONE.
BUT ALL THE SAME. WE'RE GOING TO DIE.
BUMMER.
BUT MAYBE...CAN'T YOU... DO SOMETHING SUPER OR WHATEVER?
SAVE THE DAY?!
HM. YEAH, WELL, PROBLEM IS I JUST SPENT A LOT OF TIME ON A PLANET WITH THE WRONG SUN. I WAS THERE FOR MY BIRTHDAY, THEN MY DOG GOT SHOT. IT'S A WHOLE STORY.
BUT WE HAVEN'T HIT ANY GOOD SUNS YET, SO I'M NOT REALLY CHARGED, IF THAT MAKES SENSE.
CAN'T JUST FLY OUT THERE AND HIT HIM.
OH.
BUMMER.


ALL RIGHT, WHO'S GOT REDS?
DON'T BE #%%@# SHY.
I KNOW YOU'RE #$%@ HERE. WE ALL KNOW YOU'RE #%$ HERE.
IT'S A WESTBOUND HAULFERRY--CHEAPEST, SLOWEST WAY AROUND THE COSMOS.
EVERYONE GETS BORED, EVERYONE'S GOT TO PASS THE TIME.
C'MON, BE BRAVE. STAND UP. THERE'S A %@%#&$ SPACE DRAGON OUTSIDE AND THIS IS OUR ONLY CHANCE OF SURVIVAL.
AND IT'S NOT ALL *THAT* GREAT, TO BE HONEST.
I...I HAVE S-SOME...
ALL LEGAL. I HAVE A...A PRESCRIPTION FOR G-GALAXY-SPANNING JOURNEYS. THEY H-HELP ME WITH MY ANXIETY.
SUPER.
NOW THEY GET TO HELP ME WITH MINE.

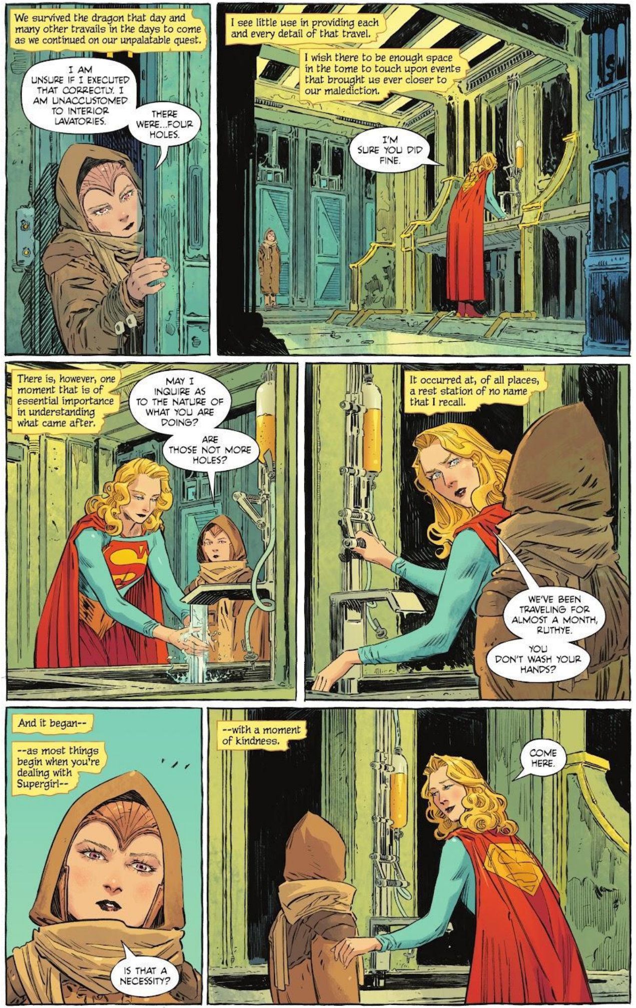


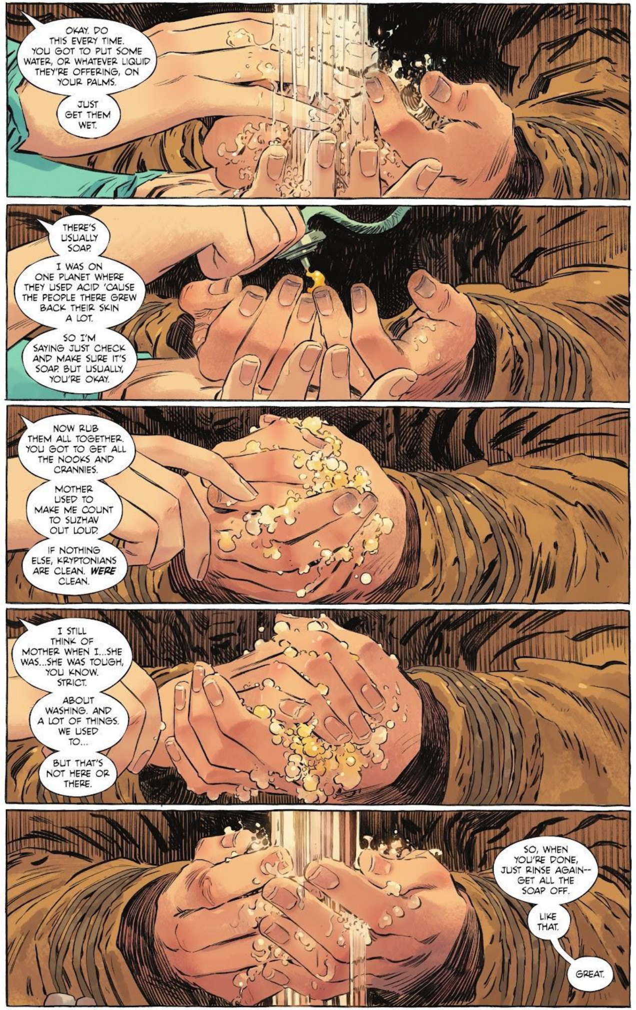
RED KRYPTONITE ENCASED IN DISSOLVABLE LEAD.
MOST PEOPLE TAKE IT, THEY GET WEIRD VISIONS ABOUT TRANSFORMING INTO THINGS.
KRYPTONIANS TAKE IT, THE VISIONS COME TRUE.
IS IT SAFE?
SOMETIMES YOU TURN INTO A HORRIBLE MONSTER, SOMETIMES YOUR HAIR GROWS TOO LONG.
IT'S SAFER THAN GETTING EATEN BY A DRAGON.
I MEAN, ON AVERAGE.
DID MY HAIR MOVE?
I DO NOT BELIEVE SO.

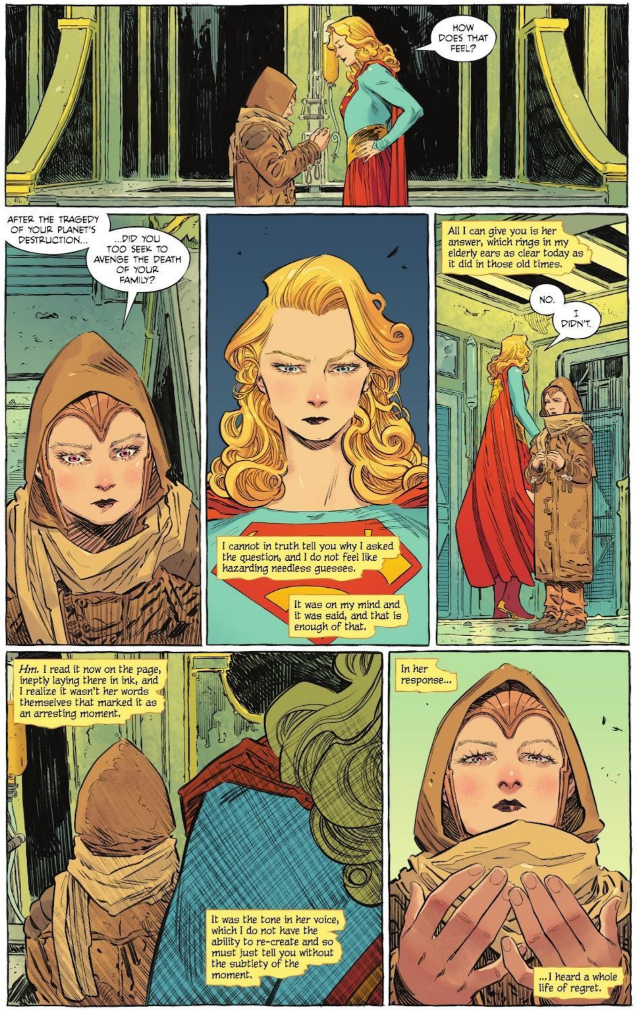


I am unlike the average farmfolk on the plain.
I had the fortune to have grown up lacking ignorance of the world's potential outside of my family's small plot.
My benevolent father had been in the Sand Wars and traveled deep and wide.
At evening's end, as my brothers suffered through their daily wrestlings, Father'd load his longpipe and sit me down at the hearthstone.
As the sweet smoke twirled, then settled, he'd tell me of his far-flung adventuring.
And in that way I learned of the Frozen Fires of Denzinir, whose melted droplets would burn to ashes in the grasses below.
Or of the Bladed Men, who had no ears but had knives for fingers and ate only as the sun set or rose.
Perhaps my favorite was the Maiden of Arista.
She collected husbands like one might flint sticks, having 431 of them when last my admirable father saw her.
I remember fondly, zealously encouraging him to detail to me the backgrounds of each of these heart-captured men.

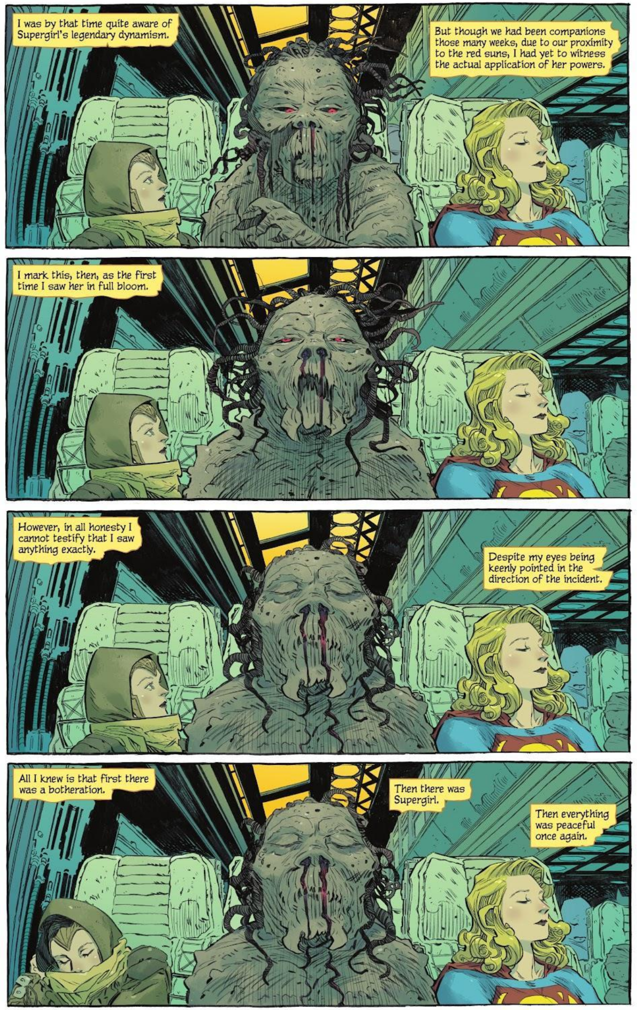

From those many nights, I was confident that I understood what wonders lay beyond the hills of our home.
On occasion, I would look out to the distant horizon, knowing someday I too would travel beyond it and sink away from sight.
Being well versed in the myths of the land, whenever that someday arrived and I did seek out my splendor...
...I fully expected to be unimpressed by the marvels that awaited me.
In short, I was a damn fool.

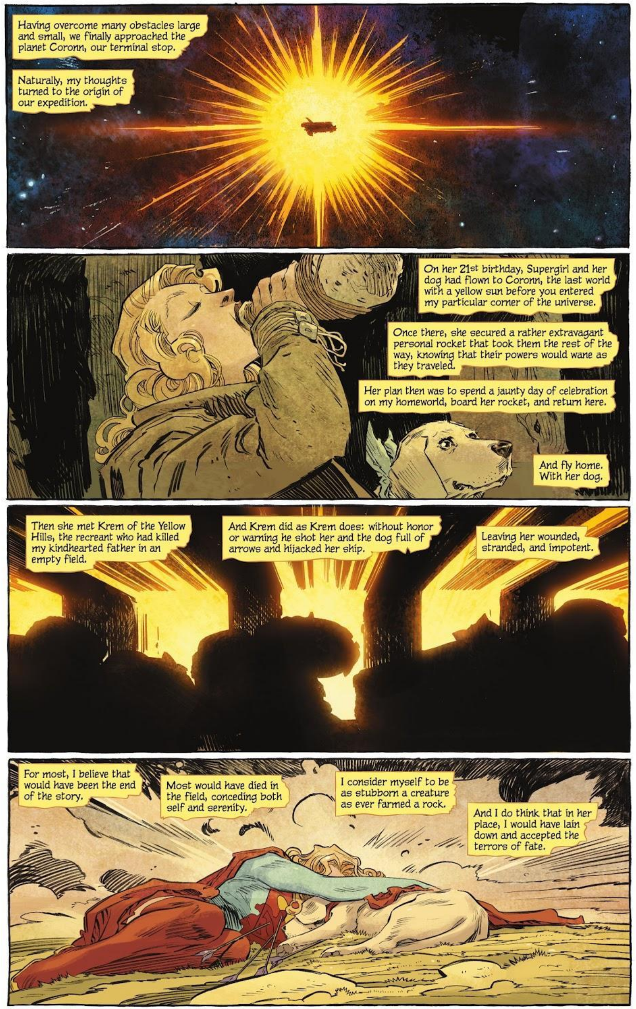

We survived the dragon that day and many other travails in the days to come as we continued on our unpalatable quest.
I AM UNSURE IF I EXECUTED THAT CORRECTLY. I AM UNACCUSTOMED TO INTERIOR LAVATORIES.
THERE WERE...FOUR HOLES.
I see little use in providing each and every detail of that travel.
I wish there to be enough space in the tome to touch upon events that brought us ever closer to our malediction.
I'M SURE YOU DID FINE.
There is, however, one moment that is of essential importance in understanding what came after.
MAY I INQUIRE AS TO THE NATURE OF WHAT YOU ARE DOING?
ARE THOSE NOT MORE HOLES?
It occurred at, of all places, a rest station of no name that I recall.
WE'VE BEEN TRAVELING FOR ALMOST A MONTH, RUTHYE.
YOU DON'T WASH YOUR HANDS?
And it began--
--as most things begin when you're dealing with Supergirl--
IS THAT A NECESSITY?
--with a moment of kindness.
COME HERE.

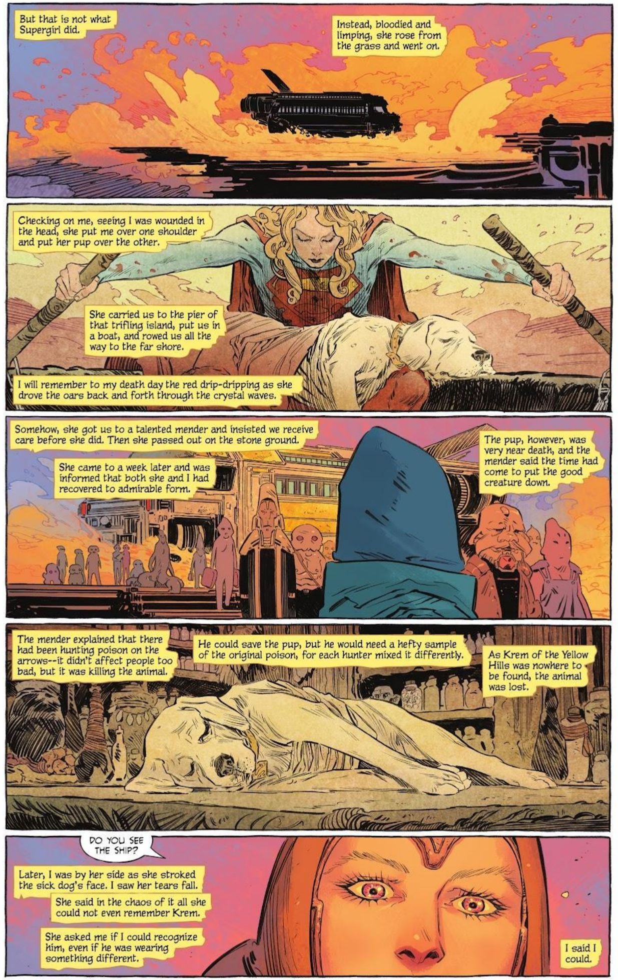

OKAY. DO THIS EVERY TIME. YOU GOT TO PUT SOME WATER, OR WHATEVER LIQUID THEY'RE OFFERING, ON YOUR PALMS.
JUST GET THEM WET.
THERE'S USUALLY SOAP.
I WAS ON ONE PLANET WHERE THEY USED ACID 'CAUSE THE PEOPLE THERE GREW BACK THEIR SKIN A LOT.
SO I'M SAYING JUST CHECK AND MAKE SURE IT'S SOAP. BUT USUALLY, YOU'RE OKAY.
NOW RUB THEM ALL TOGETHER. YOU GOT TO GET ALL THE NOOKS AND CRANNIES.
MOTHER USED TO MAKE ME COUNT TO SUZHAV OUT LOUD.
IF NOTHING ELSE, KRYPTONIANS ARE CLEAN. *WERE* CLEAN.
I STILL THINK OF MOTHER WHEN I...SHE WAS...SHE WAS TOUGH, YOU KNOW. STRICT.
ABOUT WASHING. AND A LOT OF THINGS. WE USED TO...
BUT THAT'S NOT HERE OR THERE.
SO, WHEN YOU'RE DONE, JUST RINSE AGAIN--GET ALL THE SOAP OFF.
LIKE THAT.
GREAT.


HOW DOES THAT FEEL?
AFTER THE TRAGEDY OF YOUR PLANET'S DESTRUCTION...
...DID YOU TOO SEEK TO AVENGE THE DEATH OF YOUR FAMILY?
I cannot in truth tell you why I asked the question, and I do not feel like hazarding needless guesses.
It was on my mind and it was said, and that is enough of that.
All I can give you is her answer, which rings in my elderly ears as clear today as it did in those old times.
NO.
I DIDN'T.
Hm. I read it now on the page, ineptly laying there in ink, and I realize it wasn't her words themselves that marked it as an arresting moment.
It was the tone in her voice, which I do not have the ability to re-create and so must just tell you without the subtlety of the moment.
In her response...
...I heard a whole life of regret.


Weeks passed. We took more time at each stop, drained in body and soul as one often is near the end of an arduous crossing.
After all that time on that festering machine, we were craving to stretch our legs and relieve our nostrils.
SIR, SIR, IF YOU PLEASE.
The unfortunate side effect of such lingering was our inability to again secure seats next to one another.
Resulting in a regretful repeat of an earlier situation.
MMM?
SIGH I HAVE PURCHASED PASSAGE UPON THIS SEASONED BUT STURDY VESSEL.
AND IT IS MY UNDERSTANDING THAT THERE IS A CERTAIN AMOUNT OF SPACE THAT IS GUARANTEED WITH SAID PURCHASE.
BY PLACING YOUR HEAD UNINVITED UPON MY SHOULDER IN THE MANNER YOU HAVE, YOU ARE VIOLATING THIS--
SHUT YOUR HORRID MOUTH, YOU FILTHY CHILD!
IF THIS SPACE WERE YOURS, THEN I COULD NOT TAKE IT!
I NEED TO REST, AND I SHALL REST WHERE I NEED TO!
I DON'T RECKON IT IS PROPER TO--
YOUR MISBEHAVIOR HAS GONE ON TOO--
CRAKK


I was by that time quite aware of Supergirl's legendary dynamism.
But though we had been companions those many weeks, due to our proximity to the red suns, I had yet to witness the actual application of her powers.
I mark this, then, as the first time I saw her in full bloom.
However, in all honesty I cannot testify that I saw anything exactly.
Despite my eyes being keenly pointed in the direction of the incident.
All I knew is that first there was a botheration.
Then there was Supergirl.
Then everything was peaceful once again.


Having overcome many obstacles large and small, we finally approached the planet Coronn, our terminal stop.
Naturally, my thoughts turned to the origin of our expedition.
On her 21st birthday, Supergirl and her dog had flown to Coronn, the last world with a yellow sun before you entered my particular corner of the universe.
Once there, she secured a rather extravagant personal rocket that took them the rest of the way, knowing that their powers would wane as they traveled.
Her plan then was to spend a jaunty day of celebration on my homeworld, board her rocket, and return here.
And fly home. With her dog.
Then she met Krem of the Yellow Hills, the recreant who had killed my kindhearted father in an empty field.
And Krem did as Krem does: without honor or warning he shot her and the dog full of arrows and hijacked her ship.
Leaving her wounded, stranded, and impotent.
For most, I believe that would have been the end of the story.
Most would have died in the field, conceding both self and serenity.
I consider myself to be as stubborn a creature as ever farmed a rock.
And I do think that in her place, I would have lain down and accepted the terrors of fate.


But that is not what Supergirl did.
Instead, bloodied and limping, she rose from the grass and went on.
Checking on me, seeing I was wounded in the head, she put me over one shoulder and put her pup over the other.
She carried us to the pier of that trifling island, put us in a boat, and rowed us all the way to the far shore.
I will remember to my death day the red drip-dripping as she drove the oars back and forth through the crystal waves.
Somehow, she got us to a talented mender and insisted we receive care before she did. Then she passed out on the stone ground.
She came to a week later and was informed that both she and I had recovered to admirable form.
The pup, however, was very near death, and the mender said the time had come to put the good creature down.
The mender explained that there had been hunting poison on the arrows--it didn't affect people too bad, but it was killing the animal.
He could save the pup, but he would need a hefty sample of the original poison, for each hunter mixed it differently.
As Krem of the Yellow Hills was nowhere to be found, the animal was lost.
DO YOU SEE THE SHIP?
Later, I was by her side as she stroked the sick dog's face. I saw her tears fall.
She said in the chaos of it all she could not even remember Krem.
She asked me if I could recognize him, even if he was wearing something different.
I said I could.


With her hand on her pup, she looked up at the sky, at the infinite distance separating her from the evils of that man.
She stayed looking for a moment, then turned her attention to me.
She asked if I was still determined to track down the murderer of my dear father and kill him dead.
I said I was and always would be.
She asked if I was still offering a fine sword for aid in that mission.
I again gave indication that this was still the case.
DC Comics Presents:
Supergirl: Woman of Tomorrow
Chapter Two: "Wounded, Stranded, and Impotent"
I SEE... EVERYTHING.
And at that point, Supergirl accepted the offer.
Tom King -- Writer
Bilquis Evely -- Artist
Matheus Lopes -- Colorist
Clayton Cowles -- Letterer
Evely & Lopes -- Cover
Lee Weeks & Matheus Lopes -- Variant Cover
Brittany Holzherr & Jamie S. Rich -- Editors
Supergirl based on the characters created by Jerry Siegel & Joe Shuster. By special arrangement with the Jerry Siegel Family.
To Be Continued.


DEPARTMENT OF EXTRANORMAL OPERATIONS
D.E.O.
Department of Extranormal Operations
Director Bones
MULTIVERSAL MYSTERIES TO BE SOLVED
1. Is the United Planets forming their own Justice League?
2. What sacrifice must Shazam! make?
3. Why have the Green Lanterns' rings gone dark?
4. What is the new Swamp Thing's mission?
5. Who will protect the Oceans?
6. Why has Red X infiltrated Teen Titans Academy?

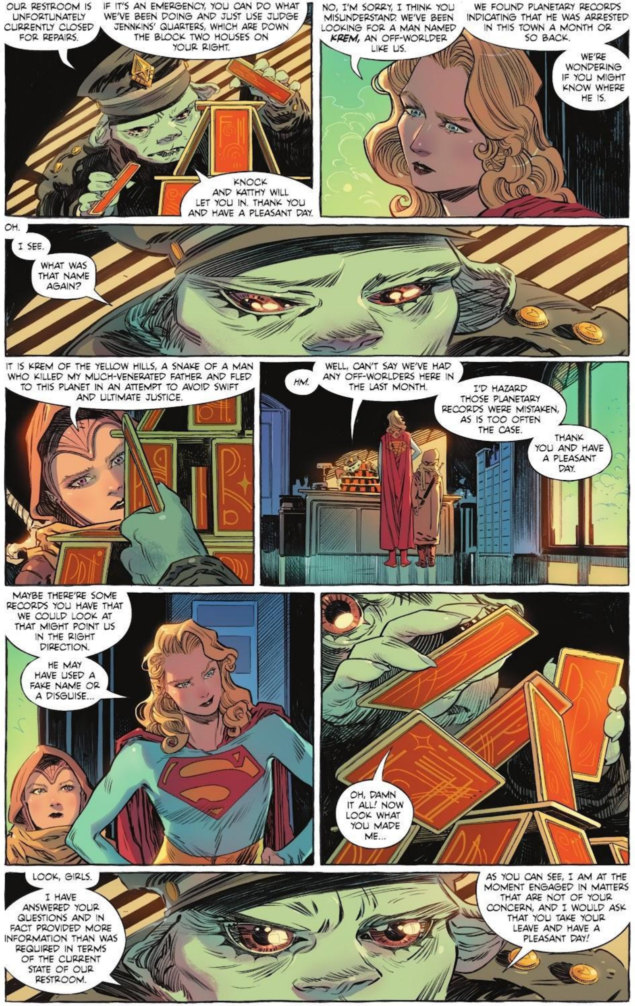

DEPARTMENT OF



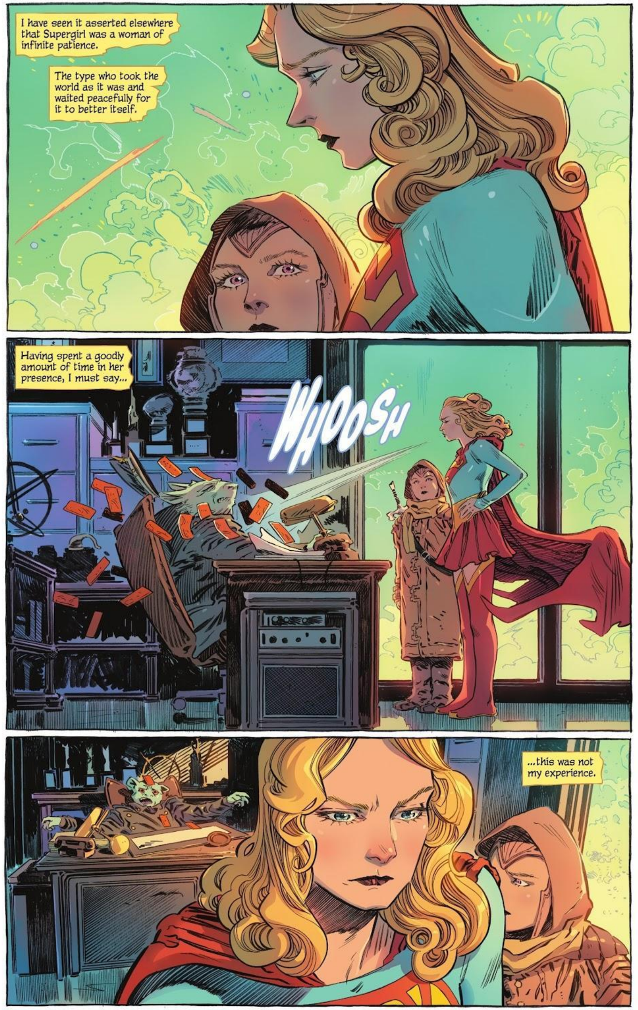
DC
SUPERGIRL
WOMAN OF TOMORROW
3 of 8
KING
EVELY
LOPES
AGES 13+
DCCOMICS.COM


THE DARK KNIGHT FACES OFF WITH THE BIG BAD WOLF!
FATES AND FISTS COLLIDE IN THIS 6-ISSUE CROSSOVER WITH THE WORLD OF
FABLES
BATMAN VS. BIGBY!
A WOLF IN GOTHAM
WRITTEN BY
BILL WILLINGHAM
ART BY
BRIAN LEVEL
SEPTEMBER
BLACK LABEL
AGES 17+
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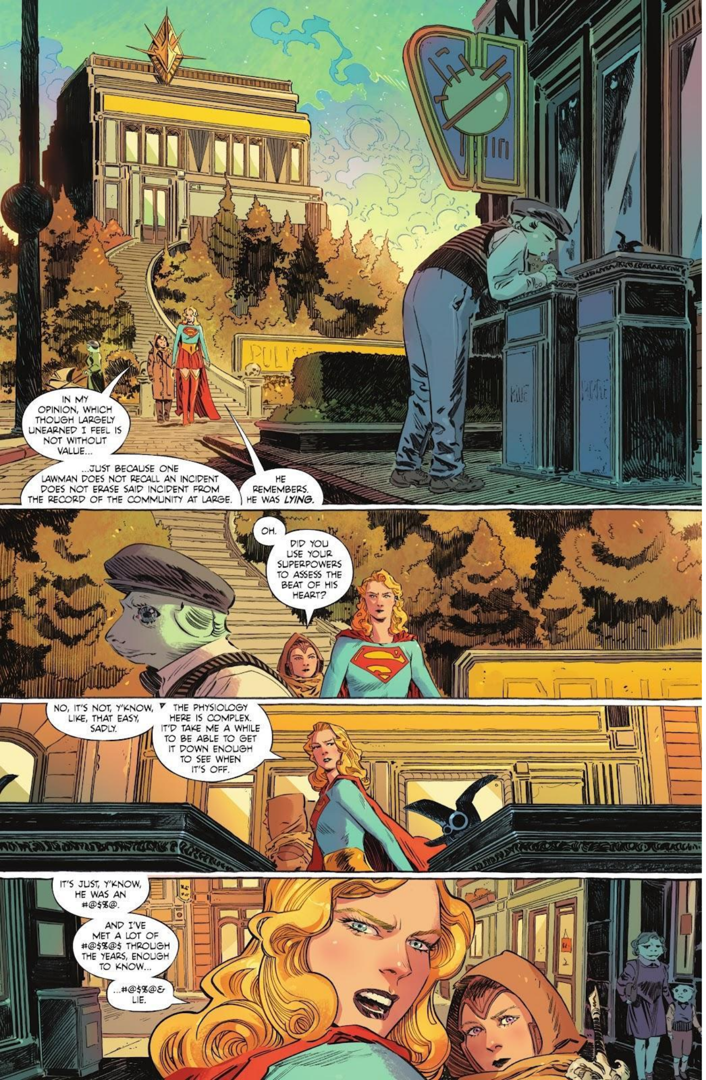

We had been on Coronn for some three weeks, doggedly pursuing every lead in our pursuit of the contemptible Krem of the Yellow Hills, when we arrived finally in Maypole.
Compared to the mammoth cities we had toured, Maypole was at that time modest, calm, and quiet.
EXCUSE ME, SIR?
I am of course aware of the startled jolt such a statement may provoke in any reader, given Maypole's now almost legendarily infamous reputation.
SIR?
But to understand this story and the actions of those persons contained herein, one must suspend today's prejudice and turn one's mind back to that long-ago moment.
HM?
Days before Supergirl uncovered the horror.
I SAID, EXCUSE ME.



OUR RESTROOM IS UNFORTUNATELY CURRENTLY CLOSED FOR REPAIRS.
IF IT'S AN EMERGENCY, YOU CAN DO WHAT WE'VE BEEN DOING AND JUST USE JUDGE JENNKINS' QUARTERS, WHICH ARE DOWN THE BLOCK TWO HOUSES ON YOUR RIGHT.
KNOCK AND KATHY WILL LET YOU IN. THANK YOU AND HAVE A PLEASANT DAY.
NO, I'M SORRY, I THINK YOU MISUNDERSTAND. WE'VE BEEN LOOKING FOR A MAN NAMED *KREM,* AN OFF-WORLDER LIKE US.
WE FOUND PLANETARY RECORDS INDICATING THAT HE WAS ARRESTED IN THIS TOWN A MONTH OR SO BACK.
WE'RE WONDERING IF YOU MIGHT KNOW WHERE HE IS.
OH.
I SEE.
WHAT WAS THAT NAME AGAIN?
IT IS KREM OF THE YELLOW HILLS, A SNAKE OF A MAN WHO KILLED MY MUCH-VENERATED FATHER AND FLED TO THIS PLANET IN AN ATTEMPT TO AVOID SWIFT AND ULTIMATE JUSTICE.
HM.
WELL, CAN'T SAY WE'VE HAD ANY OFF-WORLDERS HERE IN THE LAST MONTH.
I'D HAZARD THOSE PLANETARY RECORDS WERE MISTAKEN, AS IS TOO OFTEN THE CASE.
THANK YOU AND HAVE A PLEASANT DAY.
MAYBE THERE'RE SOME RECORDS YOU HAVE THAT WE COULD LOOK AT THAT MIGHT POINT US IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION.
HE MAY HAVE USED A FAKE NAME OR A DISGUISE...
OH, DAMN IT ALL! NOW LOOK WHAT YOU MADE ME...
LOOK, GIRLS.
I HAVE ANSWERED YOUR QUESTIONS AND IN FACT PROVIDED MORE INFORMATION THAN WAS REQUIRED IN TERMS OF THE CURRENT STATE OF OUR RESTROOM.
AS YOU CAN SEE, I AM AT THE MOMENT ENGAGED IN MATTERS THAT ARE NOT OF YOUR CONCERN, AND I WOULD ASK THAT YOU TAKE YOUR LEAVE AND HAVE A PLEASANT DAY!

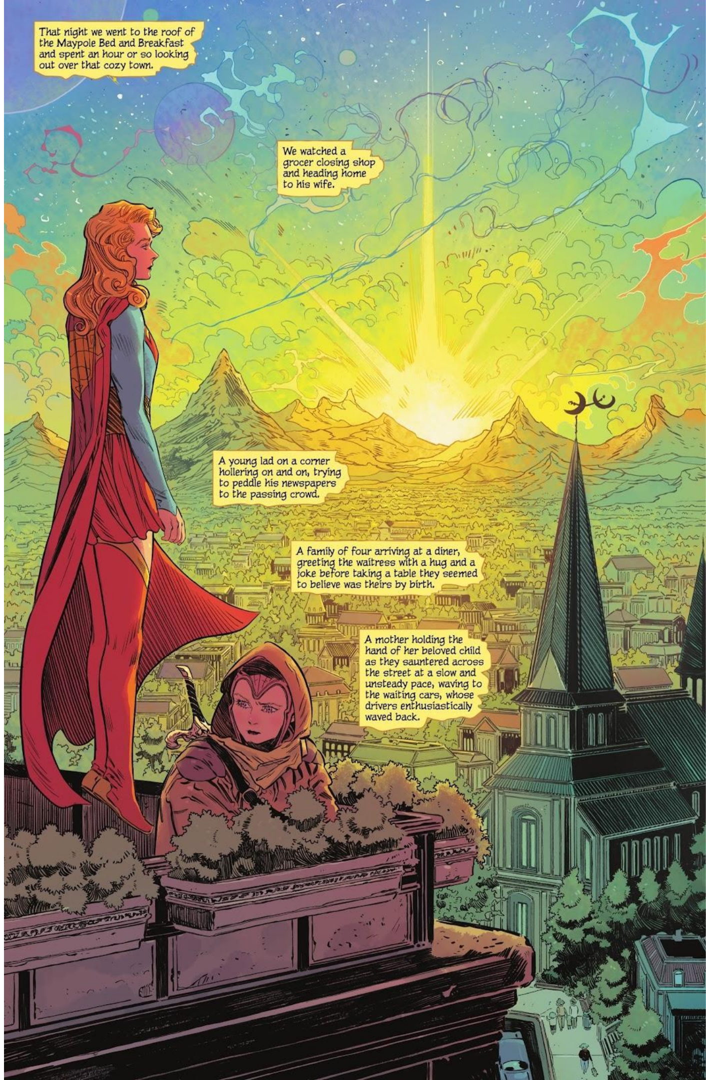


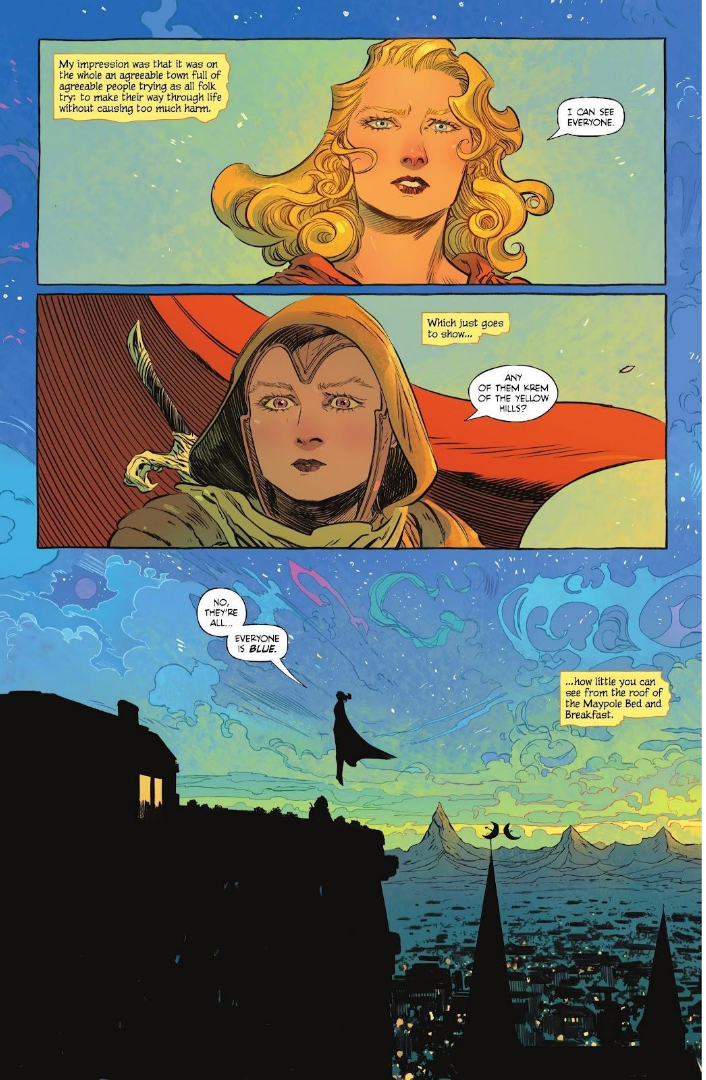
I have seen it asserted elsewhere that Supergirl was a woman of infinite patience.
The type who took the world as it was and waited peacefully for it to better itself.
Having spent a goodly amount of time in her presence, I must say...
WHOOSH
...this was not my experience.


IN MY OPINION, WHICH THOUGH LARGELY UNEARNED I FEEL IS NOT WITHOUT VALUE...
...JUST BECAUSE ONE LAWMAN DOES NOT RECALL AN INCIDENT DOES NOT ERASE SAID INCIDENT FROM THE RECORD OF THE COMMUNITY AT LARGE.
HE REMEMBERS. HE WAS *LYING.*
OH.
DID YOU USE YOUR SUPERPOWERS TO ASSESS THE BEAT OF HIS HEART?
NO, IT'S NOT, Y'KNOW, LIKE, THAT EASY, SADLY.
THE PHYSIOLOGY HERE IS COMPLEX. IT'D TAKE ME A WHILE TO BE ABLE TO GET IT DOWN ENOUGH TO SEE WHEN IT'S OFF.
IT'S JUST, Y'KNOW, HE WAS AN #@$%@.
AND I'VE MET A LOT OF #@$%@$ THROUGH THE YEARS, ENOUGH TO KNOW...
...#@$%@& LIE.


WELCOME TO MAYPOLE! WE ARE HAPPY AS PEACH PIE TO HAVE YOU!
I'M GOING TO PUT YOU TWO IN 7B, WHICH IS ONE OF MY PERSONAL FAVORITES.
WE HAD A THANAGARIAN GENERAL VISIT US ONCE AND HE COMMENTED THAT THE BED IN 7B WAS MORE COMFORTABLE THAN THE NEST HE'D BEEN RAISED IN.
I'M SORRY, I'M CONFUSED. WHERE DO I SIGN HERE? THERE'RE TWO COLUMNS.
AM I A PURPLE OR A BLUE?
OH, YOU JUST PUT YOUR LITTLE NAME DOWN THERE UNDER BLUE.
I THINK ALL OFF-WORLDERS ARE BLUE.
LIKE MY MAMA ALWAYS SAID, "TO BE PURPLE YOU GOT TO BE PURPLE."
LOOKS LIKE YOU HAVEN'T HAD ANYONE SIGN IN THE PURPLES IN A WHILE.
OH, YEAH. USED TO HAVE A BUNCH OF THEM HERE, NOT IN 7B MIND YOU, DON'T WORRY, BUT THEY WAS ALWAYS VERY FRIENDLY, VERY COURTEOUS.
BUT I MEAN, YES, THERE HAVEN'T BEEN ANY. LATELY, I MEAN.
YOU JUST SIGN THERE UNDER BLUE, DARLING. THAT'LL BE FINE.
WHY'D THEY STOP COMING?


I will admit to you that this many decades on, it has been a rare day that has passed by when I have not pondered the words of that woman.
WELL, MY DEAR.
"Happy as peach pie."
IF YOU WANT THE ROOM, YOU GOT TO #%&#@%$ SIGN. THAT'S THE LAW.
AIN'T NO LAW SAYS WE GOT TO HAVE OURSELVES A USEFUL CONVERSATION.
In my long and peripatetic life, I admit to having set my feet on the sod of countless planets.
And on each of them, time and occasion permitting, I have undertaken to find their particular version of peach pie.
And I can't honestly claim to have found one that I thought was happy.


That night we went to the roof of the Maypole Bed and Breakfast and spent an hour or so looking out over that cozy town.
We watched a grocer closing shop and heading home to his wife.
A young lad on a corner hollering on and on, trying to peddle his newspapers to the passing crowd.
A family of four arriving at a diner, greeting the waitress with a hug and a joke before taking a table they seemed to believe was theirs by birth.
A mother holding the hand of her beloved child as they sauntered across the street at a slow and unsteady pace, waving to the waiting cars, whose drivers enthusiastically waved back.


My impression was that it was on the whole an agreeable town full of agreeable people trying as all folk try: to make their way through life without causing too much harm.
I CAN SEE EVERYONE.
Which just goes to show...
ANY OF THEM KREM OF THE YELLOW HILLS?
NO, THEY'RE ALL...
EVERYONE IS *BLUE.*
...how little you can see from the roof of the Maypole Bed and Breakfast.


The next morning we decided not to eat the innkeeper's meal and instead found morning-feast at the local diner.
I SAW YOU DIDN'T SLEEP MUCH EITHER.
WHAT?
I MEAN I WOKE UP A FEW TIMES--I WAS TOSSING AND THERE YOU WERE. YOU WERE UP.
YOU WORRIED ABOUT SOMETHING?
YEAH, I DON'T KNOW...
I...IT'S FINE.
WAITRESS!


YES, MISS.
YOU NEED SOMETHING?
THAT WELCOME SIGN ABOVE THE COUNTER-- IT'S BEEN REPAINTED RECENTLY. LIKE THE FOUNTAINS I SAW OUT ON MAIN.
I LOOKED UNDERNEATH THE PAINT. IT SAYS "NO PURPLES."
WHY NO PURPLES? WHY PAINT OVER IT? I DON'T GET IT.
YOU GOING TO ORDER SOMETHING? I GOT CUSTOMERS.
I'M ASKING ABOUT THE SIGN.
I HEARD YOU. AND I'M ASKING ABOUT YOUR ORDER.
MAYBE YOU SHOULD FOCUS ON THAT AND THEN GET ON YOUR WAY.
WE ALL KNOW ABOUT YOU. WHOLE GALAXY DOES. YOU DESTROYED YOUR PLANET. DON'T COME UP HERE TRYING TO FOUL UP OURS.


We spent the rest of the day walking about town, talking to anyone willing to talk.
Asking them the same question.
Have you seen the man Krem?
And all of them giving the same answer.
No. Everything here is just as everything's always been.
Everything is nice and clean and perfect.
And blue.
We're all blue. We've always been blue.
Now stop asking questions.
Because there's nothing else to say.

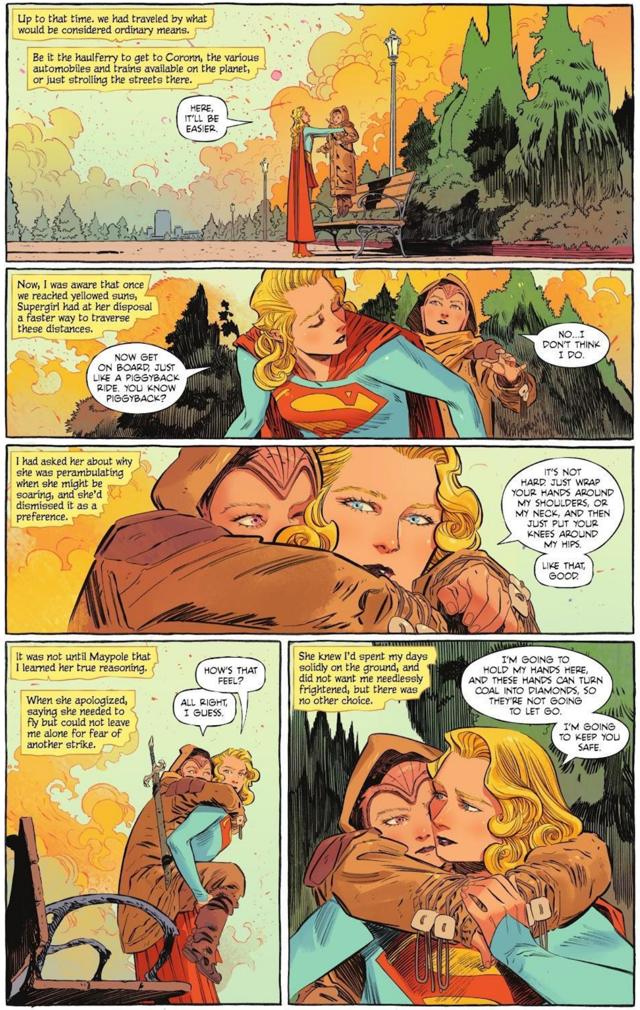

...WAKE UP, RUTHYE.
SUPERGIRL... WHAT'S...
SHHHHHHHHH.
THEY'RE CLOSE...
BLAM
BLAM BLAM BLAM BLAM
AAAAAAAAAA!
I state with neither shame nor pride that despite Supergirl's encouragings, I could not help but scream.


Gentleman Death was not an uncommon visitor on the plains, and we were taught from weaning not to dread his presence at our table.
As with all guests, we were to treat him with the utmost respect, granting him the privileges and customs we'd proffer to any member of our family.
In the years preceding my birth, three of my siblings passed before they saw Firstsun, and I recall with great clarity my mother insisting that she never shed a tear at their loss.
She would say without a snip of regret, "It would be rude to bawl in front of the Gentleman, and I do not care for rudeness."
In that moment, many miles from home, as I listened to each bullet plink off Supergirl's back...
...I knew full well that were it not for the long-ago ruin of a green planet, I would be waste on the floor.
And I howled not out of fear but in recognition at the vicissitudes of the universe that conspires both to kill us and to keep us safe from harm.
And I do believe that the Gentlemen heard that howl for what it was and smiled knowingly as he left the room.


After some time, the shooting finished.
Supergirl looked me over, and for the first--but tragically not last--time I felt the firm tingle that comes when someone's x-raying you with their eyes.
When she was satisfied as to my well-being, she placed me in a closet and asked me to swear upon the gods above and below that I'd abide there until she returned.
I agreed.
She nodded.
KKRASSHHH
And then she was gone.


I AM NOT GOING OVER THIS AGAIN! I AM THE MAYOR OF MAYPOLE! NOT YOUR PERSONAL INFORMATION SERVICE!
YOU NEED TO GET IT THROUGH THAT PRETTY LITTLE HEAD OF YOURS, I HAVE TOLD YOU ALL YOU ARE REQUIRED TO KNOW!
I ANSWER TO MY VOTERS, NOT TO SOME "SUPERGIRL," WHICH I AM WELL-INFORMED IS NOT YOUR ACTUAL NAME AND IS ACTUALLY AN ALIAS OF SOME SORT!
SIR--
WE ARE GRATEFUL THAT YOU CAUGHT THE MEN WHO ALLEGEDLY ATTACKED YOU! THANK YOU OH SO VERY MUCH!
BUT THIS HAPPENS TO BE OUR PLANET AND OUR TOWN!
IT IS CONSEQUENTLY THEN OUR RESPONSIBILITY TO QUESTION THESE MEN AND DETERMINE THE VERACITY OF THE SERIOUS ALLEGATIONS YOU HAVE MADE!
SIR, IF I--
YOU HAVE COME INTO THIS TOWN AND CAUSED DISRUPTION! DO YOU UNDERSTAND THAT?! DO YOU GET IT?! DISRUPTION!
FOR YOU NOW TO DEMAND THAT EVERYONE ACT AS IF YOU ARE THE PRINCESS OF MAYPOLE IS NOT ONLY FOOLISH, IT IS PERHAPS DANGEROUS!
MAYBE IF YOU HAD WATCHED YOURSELF MORE CLOSELY WE COULD HAVE AVOIDED ALL THIS NEEDLESS CONFLICT WE HAVE HERE!
SIR, I--
AND YOU CONTINUE TO--
GNNNGCHHH

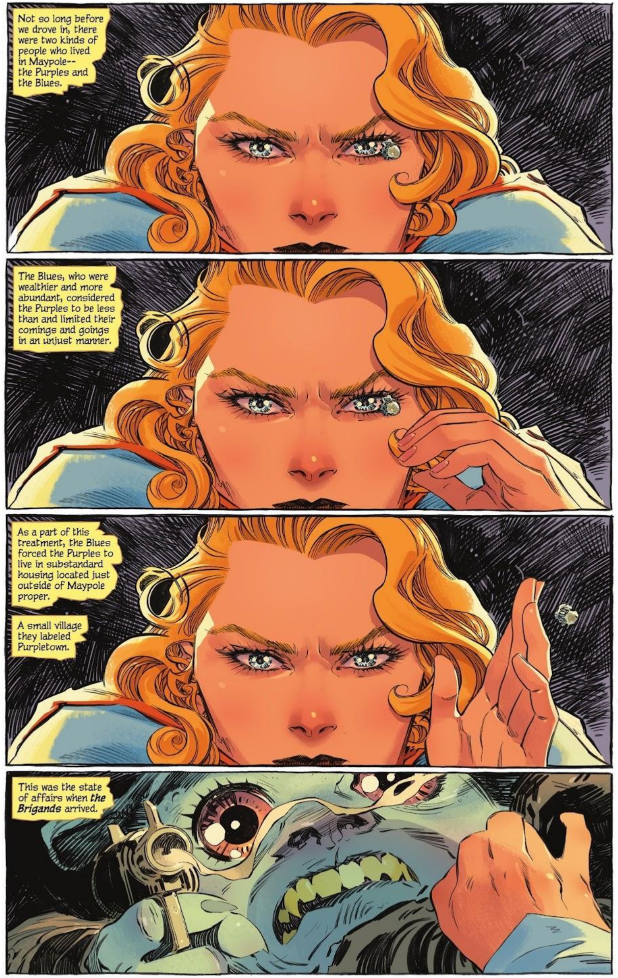

I'M DONE WAITING. I'M DONE WITH YOU. I'M DONE WITH THIS DAMN TOWN.
YOU TRIED TO SCARE ME OFF. BECAUSE YOU'RE DUMB AS DIRT. SO NOW I KNOW.
YOU'RE HIDING SOMETHING. I'M GOING TO FIND IT.
--TO TALK...
AND MY NAME *IS* *SUPERGIRL*.
KRASSHH
DISRUPTION! AND... AND VIOLATION!
THAT'S A VIOLATION! DO YOU KNOW THAT?! A VIOLATION OF OUR LAWS!
I CAN HAVE YOU ARRESTED!
NO YOU CAN'T.
BUT YOU'RE WELCOME TO $#%$#& TRY.


Up to that time, we had traveled by what would be considered ordinary means.
Be it the haulferry to get to Coronn, the various automobiles and trains available on the planet, or just strolling the streets there.
HERE, IT'LL BE EASIER.
Now, I was aware that once we reached yellowed suns, Supergirl had at her disposal a faster way to traverse these distances.
NOW GET ON BOARD, JUST LIKE A PIGGYBACK RIDE. YOU KNOW PIGGYBACK?
NO...I DON'T THINK I DO.
I had asked her about why she was perambulating when she might be soaring, and she'd dismissed it as a preference.
IT'S NOT HARD. JUST WRAP YOUR HANDS AROUND MY SHOULDERS, OR MY NECK, AND THEN JUST PUT YOUR KNEES AROUND MY HIPS.
LIKE THAT, GOOD.
It was not until Maypole that I learned her true reasoning.
When she apologized, saying she needed to fly but could not leave me alone for fear of another strike.
HOW'S THAT FEEL?
ALL RIGHT, I GUESS.
She knew I'd spent my days solidly on the ground, and did not want me needlessly frightened, but there was no other choice.
I'M GOING TO HOLD MY HANDS HERE, AND THESE HANDS CAN TURN COAL INTO DIAMONDS, SO THEY'RE NOT GOING TO LET GO.
I'M GOING TO KEEP YOU SAFE.


You see, all that time, she was worried about me.


For hours, we circled slowly around the perimeter of Maypole. Supergirl kept quiet as she scanned the ground.
I did not know what she sought and I did not ask. A woman has a right to her quiet as far as I'm concerned.
Finally, she landed.
Without a word, she started digging.
Her limbs moved with such celerity, they produced fervent gusts of wind and muck that almost knocked me to my knees.
She stopped when she found the sign.
She stopped again when she found the bodies.

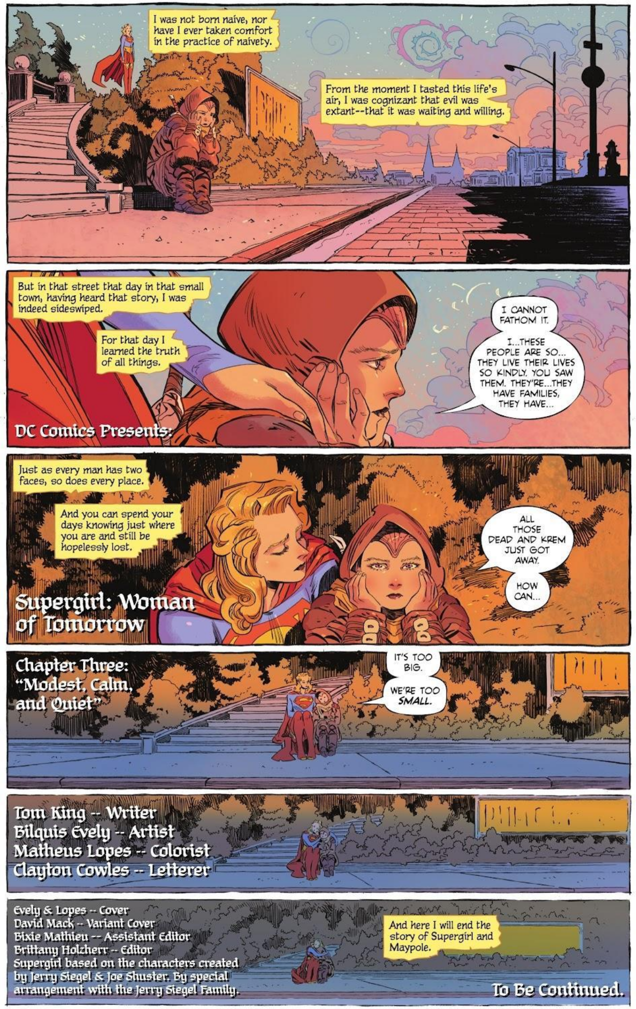


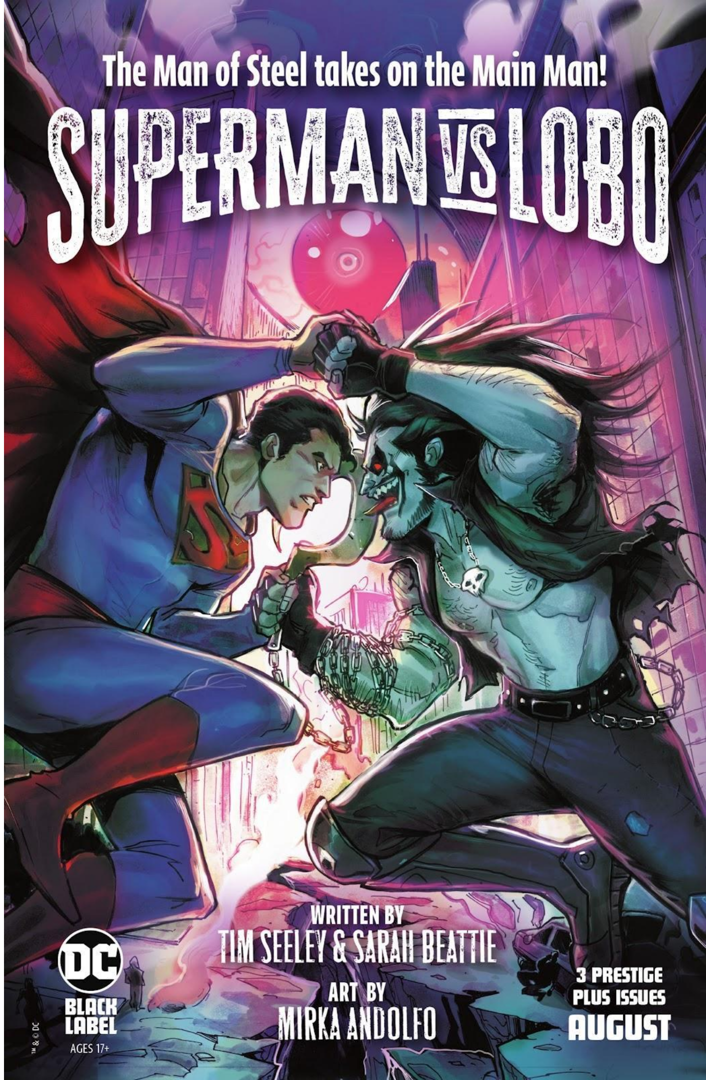


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I am sure most of you know of the dastardly reputation of Barbond's Brigands, so I will not waste your time cataloging their long history of holocaust.
But for the young and ignorant, allow me quickly to summarize their methods.
They are an unholy gathering of men who enjoy the slaughter of others with every breath they're allowed.
And they go from planet to planet "enjoying" themselves.
As killing can be costly, what with the need for fuel and weaponry, they traditionally do offer a way out.
They will accept remuneration in exchange for them overlooking one city and moving on to another.
The price for such mercy, however, is unsurprisingly steep.
Too steep for even the Blues, who, when the Brigands came for Maypole, could not afford its salvation and thus faced unspeakable terror.
A dilemma the authorities lamented in the jailhouse within earshot of the bastard, Krem of the Yellow Hills...
...who was passing through Maypole at that time and was being held on a charge of drunken misconduct.


To the shock of no man, woman, or child, the dastardly Krem offered them a solution surely born in the soul of the Threedevils.
Knowing his ashes would lie in the ground along with theirs, he wiggled and weaseled until they took him seriously enough.
How much could they pay, he asked. Could they pay some, he asked, and if they could pay some, then were they willing to make a deal, he asked.
Perhaps, he said, they could offer the Brigands a compromise: some money and some enjoyment.
The authorities recognized the practicality of the rapscallion's counsel.
And indeed a deal was made.
Which was to the satisfaction of both parties.
After the loathsome deed was carried out, Krem of the Yellow Hills was released and even feted.
In the course of this celebration, the Brigands learned of Krem's undisputable depravity and were nothing but impressed.
Recognizing themselves in this sly off-worlder, they offered Krem passage on their ship and the honor of participation in their further genocidal adventures.


I was not born naive, nor have I ever taken comfort in the practice of naivety.
From the moment I tasted this life's air, I was cognizant that evil was extant--that it was waiting and willing.
But in that street that day in that small town, having heard that story, I was indeed sideswiped.
For that day I learned the truth of all things.
I CANNOT FATHOM IT.
I...THESE PEOPLE ARE SO... THEY LIVE THEIR LIVES SO KINDLY. YOU SAW THEM. THEY'RE...THEY HAVE FAMILIES, THEY HAVE...
DC Comics Presents:
Just as every man has two faces, so does every place.
And you can spend your days knowing just where you are and still be hopelessly lost.
ALL THOSE DEAD AND KREM JUST GOT AWAY.
HOW CAN...
Supergirl: Woman of Tomorrow
Chapter Three: "Modest, Calm, and Quiet"
IT'S TOO BIG.
WE'RE TOO SMALL.
Tom King -- Writer
Bilquis Evely -- Artist
Matheus Lopes -- Colorist
Clayton Cowles -- Letterer
Evely & Lopes -- Cover
David Mack -- Variant Cover
Bixie Mathieu -- Assistant Editor
Brittany Holzherr -- Editor
Supergirl based on the characters created by Jerry Siegel & Joe Shuster. By special arrangement with the Jerry Siegel Family.
And here I will end the story of Supergirl and Maypole.
To Be Continued.


The Man of Steel takes on the Main Man!
SUPERMAN VS LOBO
WRITTEN BY
TIM SEELEY & SARAH BEATTIE
ART BY
MIRKA ANDOLFO
3 PRESTIGE PLUS ISSUES
AUGUST
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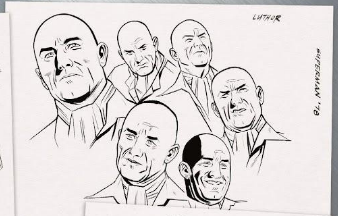
SUPERMAN '78

The comic book exclusive you've been waiting for and the sequel you thought you'd never see!

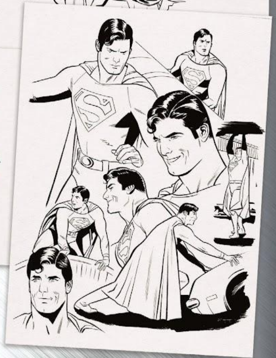
Superman '78, from writer Robert Venditti and artist Wilfredo Torres, is set in the world of *Superman: The Movie* starring the late Christopher Reeve, and starts with the crash-landing of a mysterious drone—and the arrival of Brainiac!

We opened up Torres's sketchbook for a look inside the inspired, cinematic designs for the series.











DON'T MISS *SUPERMAN '78 #1* ON SALE IN AUGUST!

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SUPERGIRL: WOMAN OF TOMORROW 3. October, 2021. Published monthly by DC Comics, 2900 W. Alameda Avenue, Burbank, CA 91505. GST # is R125921072.

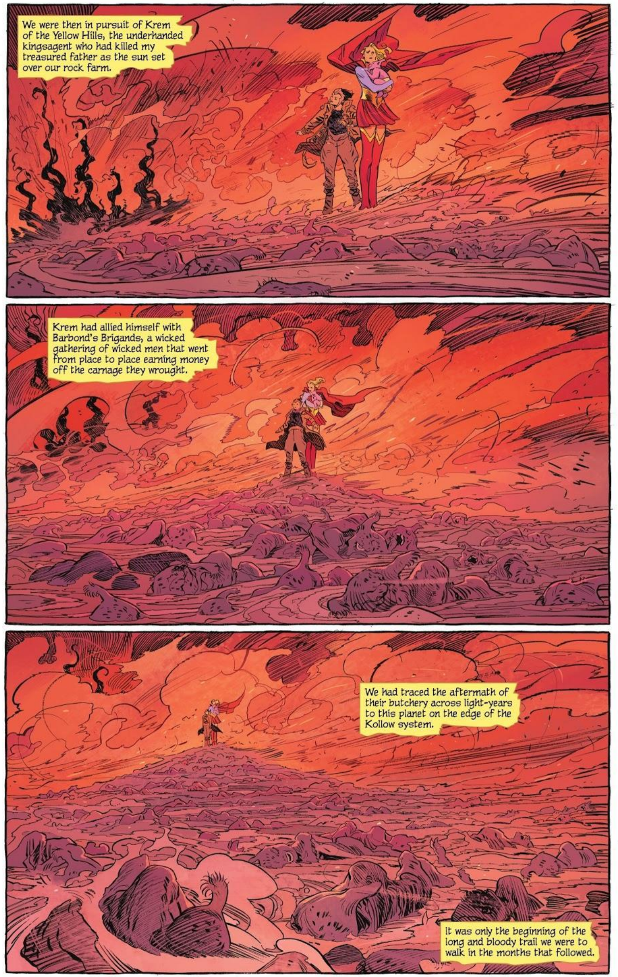


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KING
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A new hero of the seven seas for a new generation!
AQUAMAN
THE BECOMING
Written by
BRANDON THOMAS
Art by
DIEGO OLORTEGUI
DC
A 6-issue series
September


I was the youngest in my family and so did not have the experience of many girls of my age who must endure the co-mothering of their budding siblings.
GHHHAAAAA!
Now, there were cousins who were born after me, and I'd go along on the visits and watch the cooing and carping of all the other kinswomen.
GHAAA...
But the plains are a desolate country full of vast and lonely spaces, where each family must fend for itself.
COME HERE, SWEETIE.
And such visits were infrequent and frankly a mite tedious.
NNNN...
All of which is to explain why, seeing that babe screaming something awful, sitting in the hard dirt on Parnatt...
DON'T YOU WORRY ANYMORE.
...I was seized with fear and could not guess at what to do next.

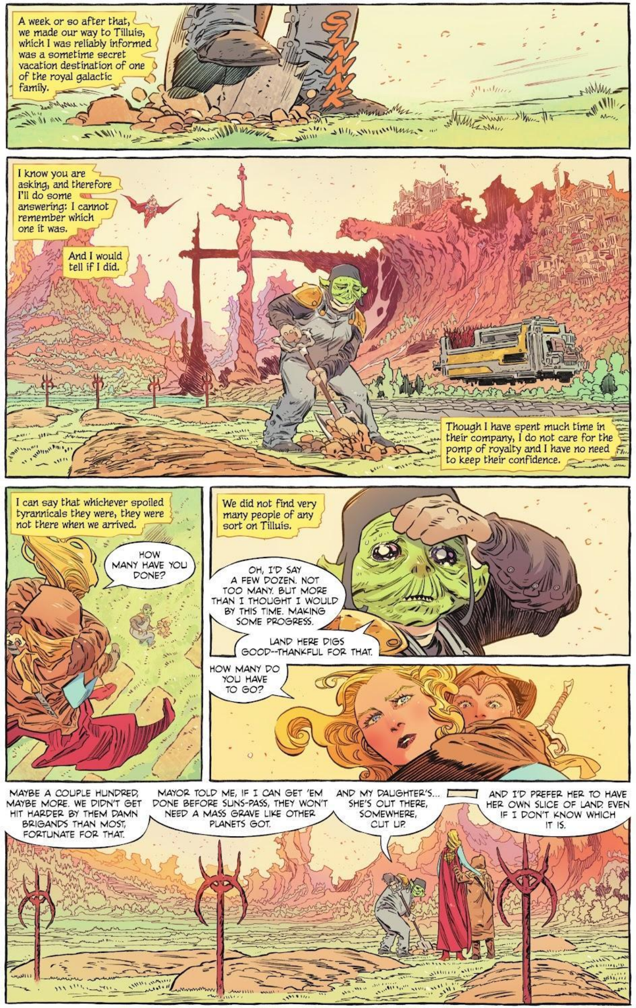

It was fortunate that Supergirl did not suffer from similar paralysis.
IT'S GOING TO BE OKAY.


We were then in pursuit of Krem of the Yellow Hills, the underhanded kingsagent who had killed my treasured father as the sun set over our rock farm.
Krem had allied himself with Barbond's Brigands, a wicked gathering of wicked men that went from place to place earning money off the carnage they wrought.
We had traced the aftermath of their butchery across light-years to this planet on the edge of the Kollow system.
It was only the beginning of the long and bloody trail we were to walk in the months that followed.

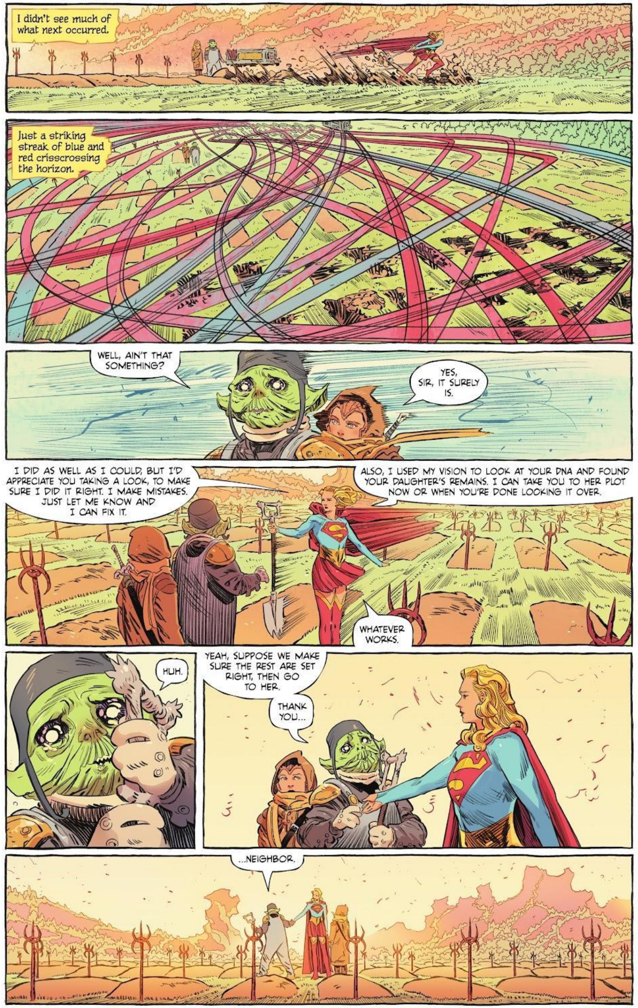

After Parnatt, we traveled on to Incolm, a small moon that circles the planet Escalm in the Piatts Galaxy.
YEAH.
I THINK I SEEN YOUR MAN.
"IT WAS AFTER THE START OF IT--SOME BRIGAND HAD JUST BOMBED A HIVECENTER AND ME AND FLARRGG WERE RUNNING.
"FLARRGG WAS A REAL GOOD RUNNER. HE COULD RUN MIGHTY FAST. I'D NEED A HEAD START TO BEAT HIM IN ANY RACE.
FLARRGG AND ME WENT BACK. WE WAS LIKE HOUNDMATES, Y'KNOW, CLOSER THAN ANYONE. HE WAS A GOOD GUY, FLARRGG.
REAL GOOD RUNNER.
MY APOLOGIES, I SAID THAT, DIDN'T I? I REPEAT MYSELF TOO MUCH. AS MY BODY HAS SLIPPED, SO HAS MY MIND.
"ANYWAY, AFTER WE SAW WHAT THEY WERE DOING, THE GUNS AND THE BOMBS AND ALL OF THAT...
"AFTER THAT WE WAS RUNNING, NOT EVEN THINKING OF WHERE TO GO, JUST GOING ZIGGING AND ZAGGING, HOPING NOTHING BAD HIT US OR FELL ON US OR ANYTHING.
"AND WE COME RIGHT TO THIS FELLOW.
THAT'S GOOD, THANK YOU.
YOU'RE WELCOME.
YOU THINK THIS GUY YOU RAN INTO IS THE KREM WE'RE TALKING ABOUT?


"WELL, I CAN'T SAY FOR A HUNDRED PERCENT, BUT HE MATCHES WHAT YOU ALL TOLD ME IN TERMS OF HIS FACE AND SWORD AND ALL OF THEM KIND OF DETAILS.
"BUT I BEEN WRONG BEFORE, I BEEN WRONG SO MANY TIMES, SO MAYBE I'M WRONG HERE. I'M NOT SAYING I KNOW IT FOR SURE.
"HELL, I HOPE TO GOD I'M WRONG AGAIN HERE, IF YOU UNDERSTAND. I HOPE YOUR MAN IS PLENTY DIFFERENT FROM THE MAN I MET.
I HOPE YOUR MAN AIN'T LIKE THAT MAN.
I HOPE YOUR MAN HAS SOME MERCY LEFT IN HIM.
I HOPE THAT OF ALL MEN.
"HE WENT AT FLARRGG RIGHT OFF. DIDN'T EVEN STOP FOR A WARNING OR NOTHING.
"JUST STABBED HIM THROUGH WHILE WE WAS STANDING THERE GAWKING.
"HE WAS A REAL GOOD MAN, FLARRGG.
"WE'D BEEN THROUGH SO MUCH, LIKE HOUNDMATES, Y'KNOW, AND WHEN YOU BEEN THROUGH THAT, A SWORD THROUGH HIM FEELS LIKE A SWORD THROUGH YOU."


YEAH.
"AFTER FLARRGG WAS ON THE GROUND, THIS FELLOW WHO COULD BE YOUR FELLOW, HE STARTED HACKING AT ME.
"AT FIRST I DIDN'T FEEL NOTHING--I WAS MOSTLY FOCUSED ON FLARRGG, WHO WAS JUST CARRYING ON LIKE YOU WOULDN'T BELIEVE.
FLARRGG WASN'T VERY LOUD MOST OF THE TIME. I REMEMBER A LOT OF TIMES PEOPLE'D ASK ME WHAT HE WAS SAYING 'CAUSE HE WAS TALKING SO SOFT.
BUT THEN AT THAT TIME HE WAS YELLING, AND THAT WAS MY HONEST THOUGHT. I WAS THINKING, DANG, THAT'S PRETTY LOUD, FLARRGG.
DIDN'T KNOW YOU HAD IT IN YOU.
"YOU KNOW, AT SOME POINT I THINK FLARRGG MUST HAVE PASSED AND STOPPED SCREAMING, BUT I DIDN'T RECOGNIZE IT AT FIRST.
"SEE, I'D STARTED MY OWN CRYING OUT BY THAT TIME AND I GOT IT CONFUSED WITH HIS, AND I WAS TRULY A BIT STARTLED WHEN I REALIZED I WAS LISTENING TO MYSELF.
ANYHOW, THAT WAS SOMETHING. I HOPE MY STORY HELPS.
I DO APPRECIATE YOU COMING HERE. IT'S REAL NICE. THEY GOT NURSES TO DO THIS, BUT IT'S CROWDED WITH SO MANY OF US HURT FOLK.
SOMETIMES I GOT TO WAIT HOURS TO EAT. IF FLARRGG WERE HERE, HE WOULD'VE HELPED ME, I THINK. HE WAS A GOOD FRIEND, FLARRGG. LIKE HOUNDMATES.

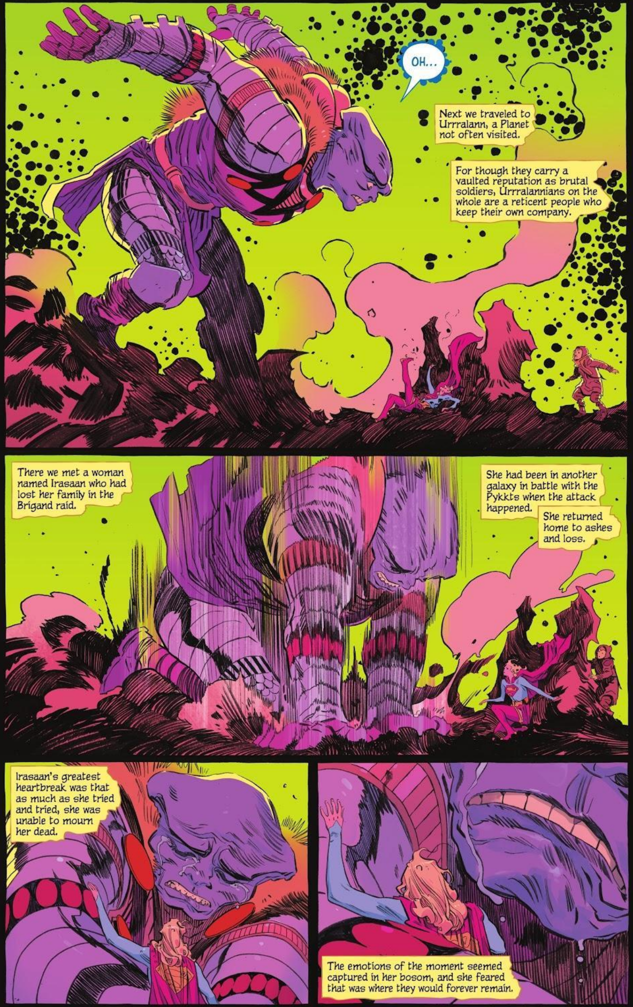

A week or so after that, we made our way to Tilluis, which I was reliably informed was a sometime secret vacation destination of one of the royal galactic family.
SHNNK
I know you are asking, and therefore I'll do some answering: I cannot remember which one it was.
And I would tell if I did.
Though I have spent much time in their company, I do not care for the pomp of royalty and I have no need to keep their confidence.
I can say that whichever spoiled tyrannicals they were, they were not there when we arrived.
HOW MANY HAVE YOU DONE?
We did not find very many people of any sort on Tilluis.
OH, I'D SAY A FEW DOZEN. NOT TOO MANY. BUT MORE THAN I THOUGHT I WOULD BY THIS TIME. MAKING SOME PROGRESS.
LAND HERE DIGS GOOD--THANKFUL FOR THAT.
HOW MANY DO YOU HAVE TO GO?
MAYBE A COUPLE HUNDRED, MAYBE MORE. WE DIDN'T GET HIT HARDER BY THEM DAMN BRIGANDS THAN MOST, FORTUNATE FOR THAT.
MAYOR TOLD ME, IF I CAN GET 'EM DONE BEFORE SUNS-PASS, THEY WON'T NEED A MASS GRAVE LIKE OTHER PLANETS GOT.
AND MY DAUGHTER'S... SHE'S OUT THERE, SOMEWHERE, CUT UP.
AND I'D PREFER HER TO HAVE HER OWN SLICE OF LAND, EVEN IF I DON'T KNOW WHICH IT IS.


SIR?
WILL YOU LET ME HELP?
OH, THAT'S AWFUL NICE OF YOU, BUT IT'S PROBABLY MY DUTY AS A CITIZEN OF THIS WORLD. JUST WHAT I GOT TO DO.
IT'S LIKE ANYTHING, ISN'T IT? AIN'T NOTHING TO DO BUT GET IT DONE.
SURE, YEAH, I GET IT. WE ALL HAVE OUR DUTIES.
AND IT'S MINE AS A NEIGHBOR TO DO WHAT I CAN TO HELP YOU WITH YOURS.
PLEASE.
WELL...
I SEE YOUR POINT, AND TO BE HONEST MY BACK COULD USE THE RESPITE.
MAYBE IT'LL HELP ME GO FASTER IN THE LONG RUN, WHICH IS WORTH SOMETHING, I THINK.
ANYWAY, SUNS-PASS CAN COME UP QUICK ON YOU, NO DOUBT ABOUT THAT.
WHICH IS TO SAY, THANK YOU, I WOULD INDEED VERY MUCH APPRECIATE YOUR AID IN THIS MATTER.


I didn't see much of what next occurred.
Just a striking streak of blue and red crisscrossing the horizon.
WELL, AIN'T THAT SOMETHING?
YES, SIR, IT SURELY IS.
I DID AS WELL AS I COULD, BUT I'D APPRECIATE YOU TAKING A LOOK, TO MAKE SURE I DID IT RIGHT. I MAKE MISTAKES. JUST LET ME KNOW AND I CAN FIX IT.
ALSO, I USED MY VISION TO LOOK AT YOUR DNA AND FOUND YOUR DAUGHTER'S REMAINS. I CAN TAKE YOU TO HER PLOT NOW OR WHEN YOU'RE DONE LOOKING IT OVER.
WHATEVER WORKS.
HUH.
YEAH, SUPPOSE WE MAKE SURE THE REST ARE SET RIGHT, THEN GO TO HER.
THANK YOU...
...NEIGHBOR.


HIT ME.
YOU ARE SMALL.
I AM LARGE.
IT WILL HURT.
NO IT WON'T. I SWEAR, I'LL BE FINE.
YOU JUST PRETEND I'M THEM--THESE BRIGANDS. I DID ALL THIS TO YOU AND YOUR FAMILY.
JUST PICTURE THAT AND HIT ME.
WHY SHOULD I DO THIS?
WHY--ARE YOU SCARED?!
IS THAT IT?!
C'MON. HIT ME!
I AM NOT SCARED! YOU DO NOT UNDERSTAND!
YOU ARE SMALL!
I AM LARGE!
YOU'RE NOT LARGE. IF YOU WERE LARGE YOU WOULD'VE STOPPED THEM!
ALL YOU ARE IS %#%@&% SMALL!


POW
THAT'S IT?
I THOUGHT YOU--
POW
POW
NO, NO, THAT'S NOT IT...
YOU GOT TO--


OH...
Next we traveled to Urrralann, a Planet not often visited.
For though they carry a vaulted reputation as brutal soldiers, Urrralannians on the whole are a reticent people who keep their own company.
There we met a woman named Irasaan who had lost her family in the Brigand raid.
She had been in another galaxy in battle with the Pykkts when the attack happened.
She returned home to ashes and loss.
Irasaan's greatest heartbreak was that as much as she tried and tried, she was unable to mourn her dead.
The emotions of the moment seemed captured in her bosom, and she feared that was where they would forever remain.


I'M NOT GOING TO GO OVER IT AGAIN.
IT'S A NO, YOU CAN'T.
I AM NOT SOME INNOCENT WITH EYES MOISTENED BY THE MORNING DEW!
I AM THE ONE WHO DISCOVERED MY FATHER'S WRECKED BODY! I WILL NOT THEN TURN MY BACK TO THE GORE OF HIS KILLER FOR FEAR OF BLUSHING!
IT IS MY RIGHT!
WHAT RIGHT? WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?!
I AM TRYING TO SAVE SOMEONE. I AM TRYING TO SAVE MY DOG.
YOU DON'T HAVE TO SEE THIS, AND I DO, AND IF YOU DON'T HAVE TO, YOU WON'T. THAT'S THE END OF IT.
WE BOTH HAVE OUR MISSIONS!
MY VENGEANCE IS NOT LESSER THAN YOUR NOBILITY!
NO ONE SHOULD...
JUST NO, OKAY? NO IS THE ANSWER.
THAT DOESN'T MAKE ANY SENSE!
IF YOU COULD SUFFER IT, I CAN DAMN WELL SUFFER IT!



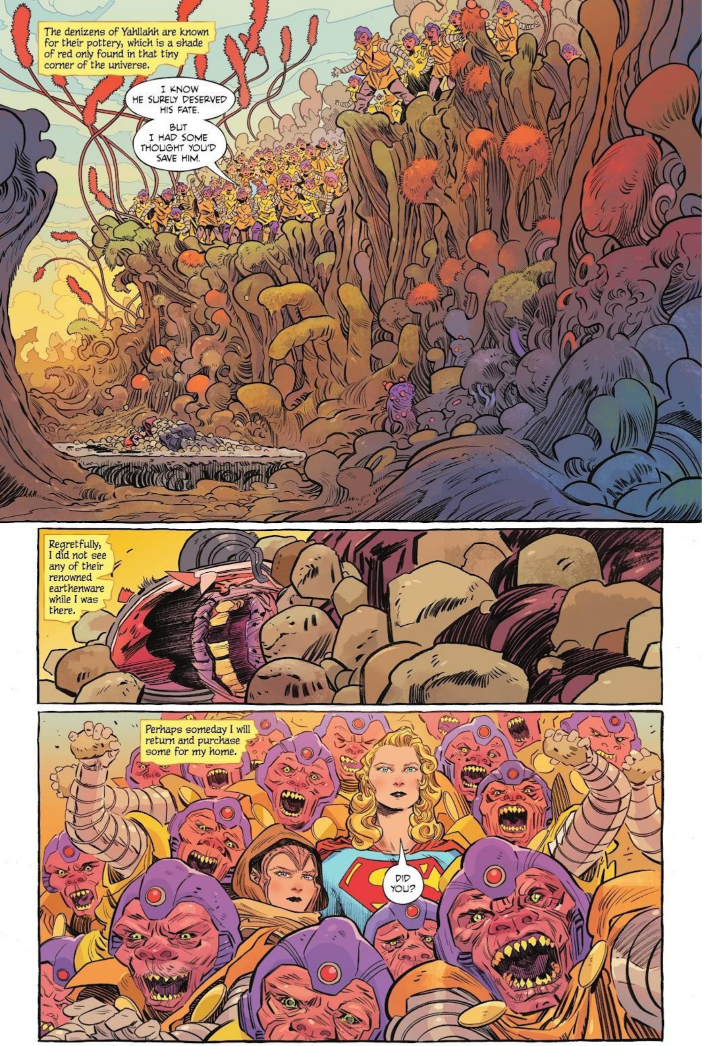
The next world we went to was Tyrrrcoomn, which is not well-known and I would not care to visit again.
Memories of navigating the lava forests there still appear in my dreams on days when my anxiety becomes particularly acute.
Perhaps because of the monstrosity of their landscape, the people of this planet were determined to document the happenings outside of their shelters.
They kept detailed records of all the goings-on that would put even my fastidious mother, who cataloged every pebble of import and export, to shame.
Thus, when Supergirl and I inquired, they told us they had tapes of the Brigands' actions and we were free to watch what had occurred.
Up to that point we had only witnessed the aftereffects of their massacres.
And I was eager, as all young ones are, to see if the terror of my imagination, of what I assumed had happened, matched the truth of what had actually been executed.
So to speak.

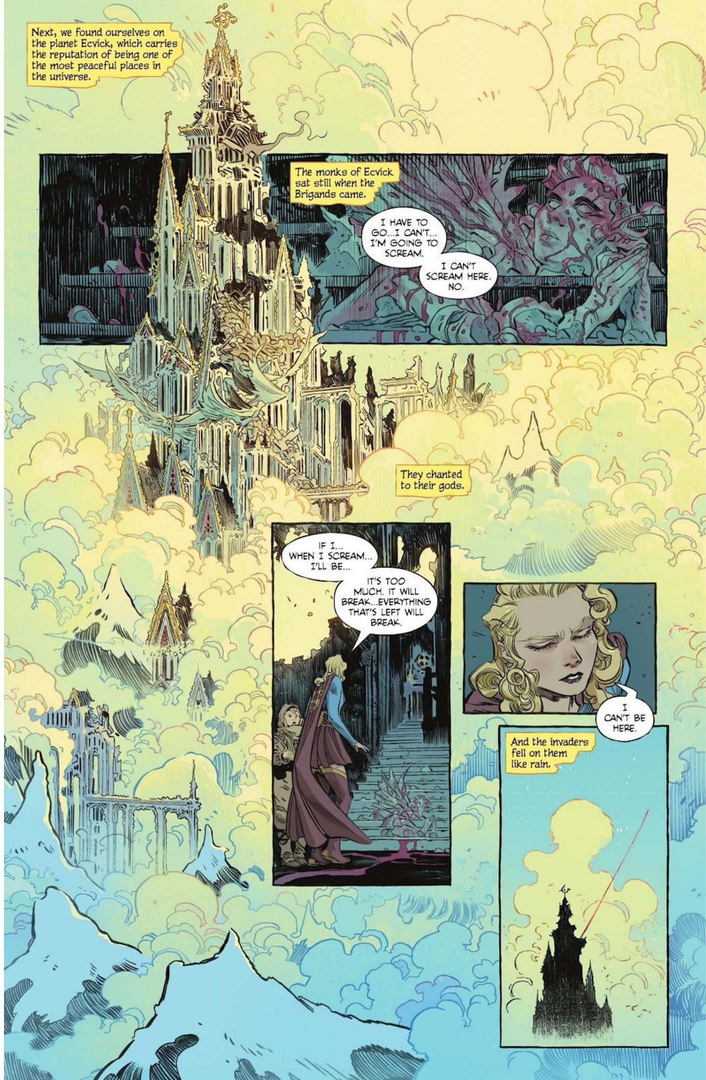


ZZNNNNN...
crckkk
HM.
I'M SORRY, I FELL ASLEEP.
YOU WERE TAKING SOME TIME. HOW LONG'S IT BEEN?
DID YOU SEE HIM?
SUPERGIRL?
I'M SORRY, WHAT?
YOU ALL RIGHT?
DID YOU SEE IT? WAS HE THERE? KREM?
YEAH.
YEAH, HE WAS...
I SAW IT. ALL OF IT.


HAVE YOU GOT LAST WORDS?
I GOT SOME.
ALL RIGHT.
LET'S HEAR IT.
I JUST WANT TO SAY...
...BEFORE YOU ALL CAUGHT ME...
...HELL, I'D BE LYING IF I DIDN'T SAY I HAD A BUNCH OF FUN.
SO THANK YOU ALL FOR THAT.
I AM IN YOUR DEBT.
ALL RIGHT.
THAT IT?
I'M DONE.
IS WHAT IT IS.
LONG LIVE THE BRIGANDS OF--

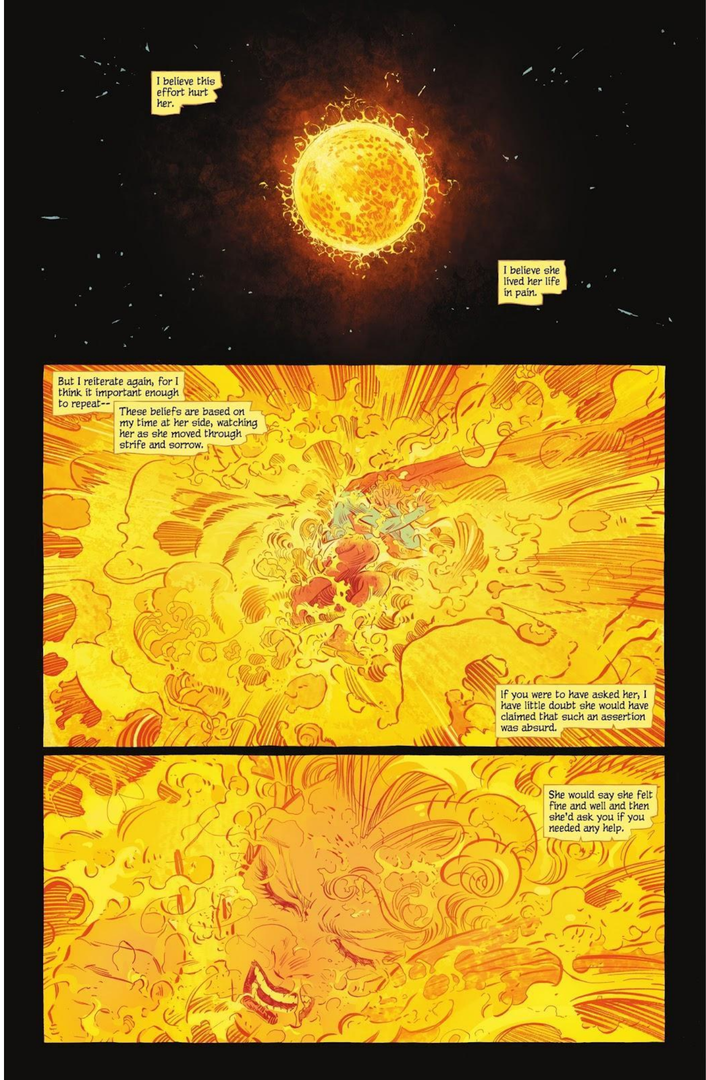

CRACK
UGNNN--
GNNNN--
CRACK
CRACK
CRACK
CRACK
NNN--
CRACK
CRACK
CRACK
CRACK
Some time later we traced the Brigands to Yahllahh, a planet in the Vexz system.
CRACK
CRACK


The denizens of Yahllahh are known for their pottery, which is a shade of red only found in that tiny corner of the universe.
I KNOW HE SURELY DESERVED HIS FATE.
BUT I HAD SOME THOUGHT YOU'D SAVE HIM.
Regretfully, I did not see any of their renowned earthenware while I was there.
Perhaps someday I will return and purchase some for my home.
DID YOU?

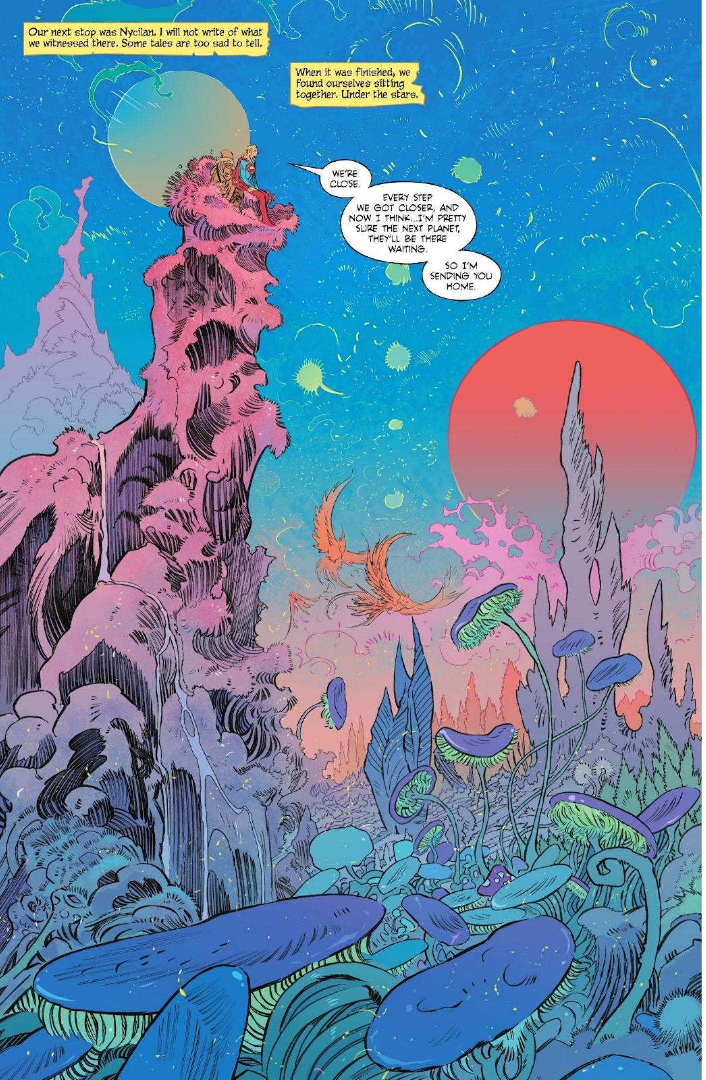

Next, we found ourselves on the planet Ecvick, which carries the reputation of being one of the most peaceful places in the universe.
The monks of Ecvick sat still when the Brigands came.
I HAVE TO GO...I CAN'T... I'M GOING TO SCREAM.
I CAN'T SCREAM HERE. NO.
They chanted to their gods.
IF I... WHEN I SCREAM... I'LL BE...
IT'S TOO MUCH. IT WILL BREAK...EVERYTHING THAT'S LEFT WILL BREAK.
I CAN'T BE HERE.
And the invaders fell on them like rain.

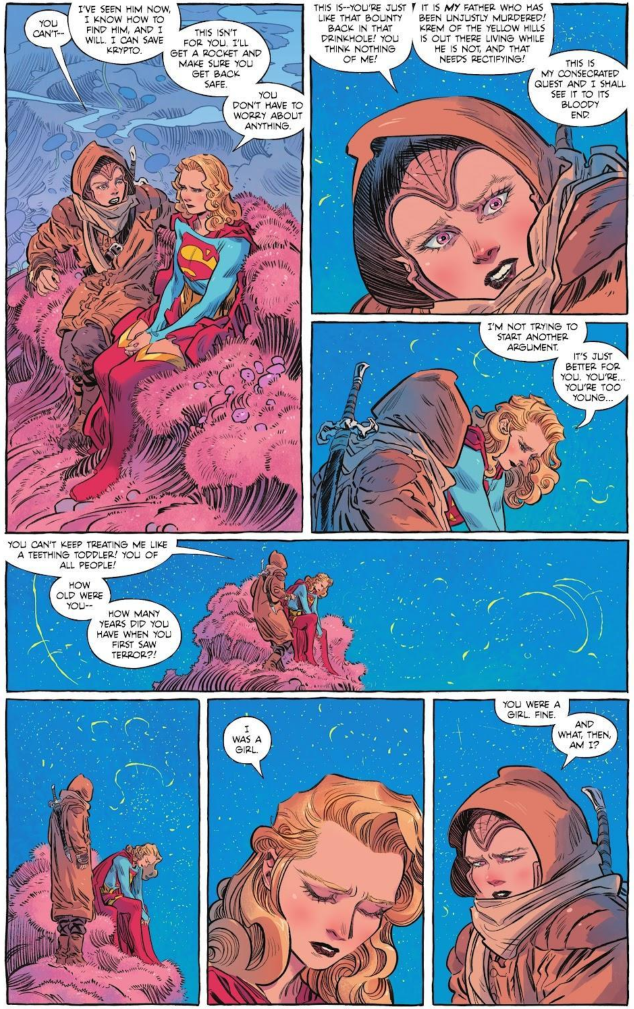


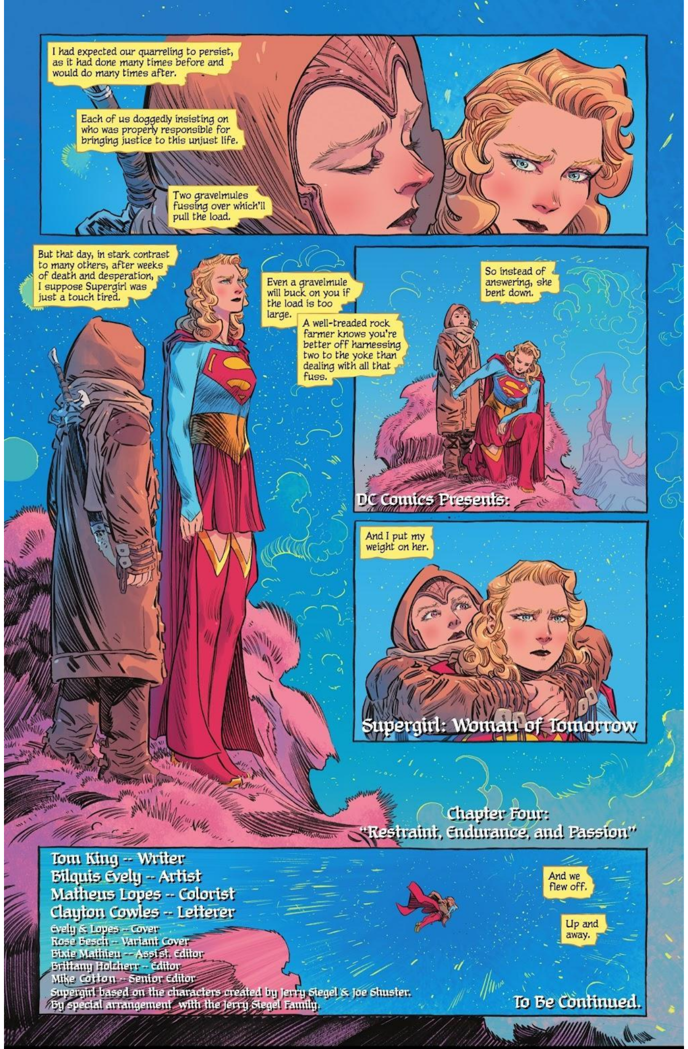
What I write next I write based on my observations in those long-ago days at the side of the greatest warrior in the history of this august reality we all call home.
It is important to note that my assertions do not rely on anything Supergirl said.
It was not a subject we ever discussed or even approached, but nonetheless I believe it to be as true as the turning of worlds.
You see, what is not well understood about the daughter of Krypton is that her power was not one of action but one of restraint, endurance, and passion.
She did not choose to fire a beam from her eyes, or have breath of ice, or run faster than a speeding bullet.
Or any of her other well-documented miracles.
No, she held back her heat vision to look you in the face.
She warmed her breath to converse with you.
She slowed herself to walk by your side.
Every moment of every day, she suppressed the forces churning inside of her.
All the energy of a dead world that strained against her many barriers, eternally demanding to be released.



I believe this effort hurt her.
I believe she lived her life in pain.
But I reiterate again, for I think it important enough to repeat--
These beliefs are based on my time at her side, watching her as she moved through strife and sorrow.
If you were to have asked her, I have little doubt she would have claimed that such an assertion was absurd.
She would say she felt fine and well and then she'd ask you if you needed any help.

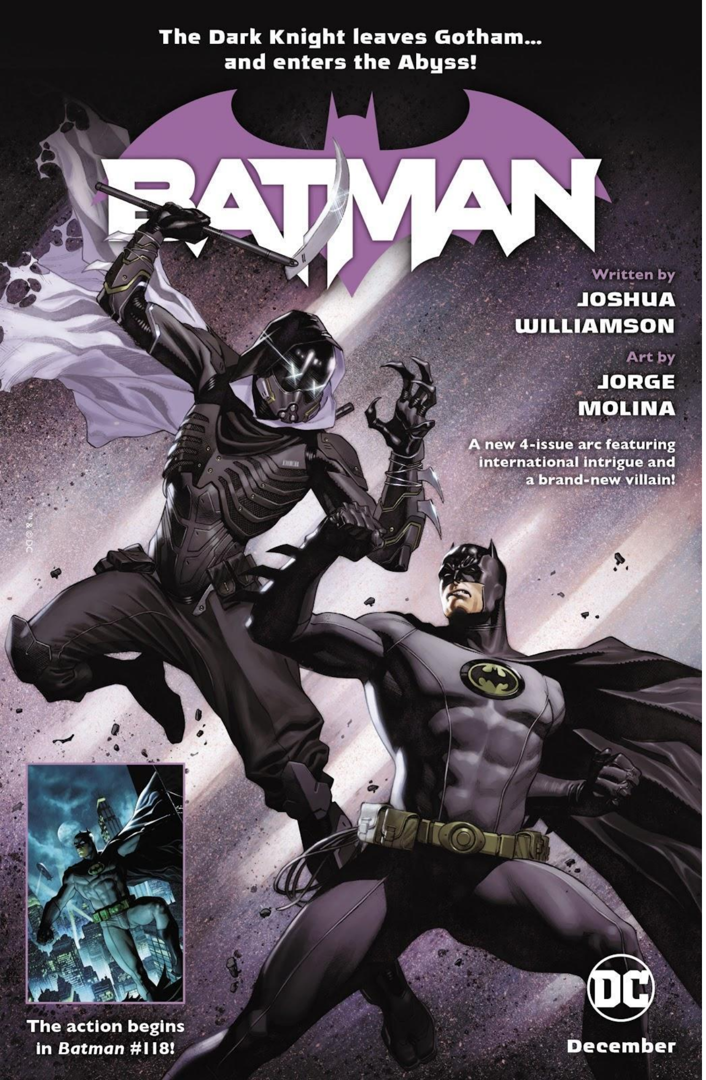

Our next stop was Nycilan. I will not write of what we witnessed there. Some tales are too sad to tell.
When it was finished, we found ourselves sitting together. Under the stars.
WE'RE CLOSE.
EVERY STEP WE GOT CLOSER, AND NOW I THINK...I'M PRETTY SURE THE NEXT PLANET, THEY'LL BE THERE WAITING.
SO I'M SENDING YOU HOME.


YOU CAN'T--
I'VE SEEN HIM NOW, I KNOW HOW TO FIND HIM, AND I WILL. I CAN SAVE KRYPTO.
THIS ISN'T FOR YOU. I'LL GET A ROCKET AND MAKE SURE YOU GET BACK SAFE.
YOU DON'T HAVE TO WORRY ABOUT ANYTHING.
THIS IS--YOU'RE JUST LIKE THAT BOUNTY BACK IN THAT DRINKHOLE! YOU THINK NOTHING OF ME!
IT IS MY FATHER WHO HAS BEEN UNJUSTLY MURDERED! KREM OF THE YELLOW HILLS IS OUT THERE LIVING WHILE HE IS NOT, AND THAT NEEDS RECTIFYING!
THIS IS MY CONSECRATED QUEST AND I SHALL SEE IT TO ITS BLOODY END.
I'M NOT TRYING TO START ANOTHER ARGUMENT.
IT'S JUST BETTER FOR YOU. YOU'RE... YOU'RE TOO YOUNG...
YOU CAN'T KEEP TREATING ME LIKE A TEETHING TODDLER! YOU OF ALL PEOPLE!
HOW OLD WERE YOU--
HOW MANY YEARS DID YOU HAVE WHEN YOU FIRST SAW TERROR?!
I WAS A GIRL.
YOU WERE A GIRL. FINE.
AND WHAT, THEN, AM I?



I had expected our quarreling to persist, as it had done many times before and would do many times after.
Each of us doggedly insisting on who was properly responsible for bringing justice to this unjust life.
Two gravelmules fussing over which'll pull the load.
But that day, in stark contrast to many others, after weeks of death and desperation, I suppose Supergirl was just a touch tired.
Even a gravelmule will buck on you if the load is too large.
A well-treaded rock farmer knows you're better off harnessing two to the yoke than dealing with all that fuss.
So instead of answering, she bent down.
DC Comics Presents:
And I put my weight on her.
Supergirl: Woman of Tomorrow
Chapter Four:
"Restraint, Endurance, and Passion"
Tom King -- Writer
Bilquis Evely -- Artist
Matheus Lopes -- Colorist
Clayton Cowles -- Letterer
Evely & Lopes -- Cover
Rose Besch -- Variant Cover
Bixie Mathieu -- Assist. Editor
Brittany Holzherr -- Editor
Mike Cotton -- Senior Editor
Supergirl based on the characters created by Jerry Siegel & Joe Shuster.
By special arrangement with the Jerry Siegel Family.
And we flew off.
Up and away.
To Be Continued.


DC
5 of 8
SUPERGIRL
WOMAN OF TOMORROW
KING
EVELY
LOPES
AGES 13+
DCCOMICS.COM


The Dark Knight leaves Gotham...
and enters the Abyss!
BATMAN
Written by
JOSHUA WILLIAMSON
Art by
JORGE MOLINA
A new 4-issue arc featuring international intrigue and a brand-new villain!
The action begins in *Batman* #118!
DC
December

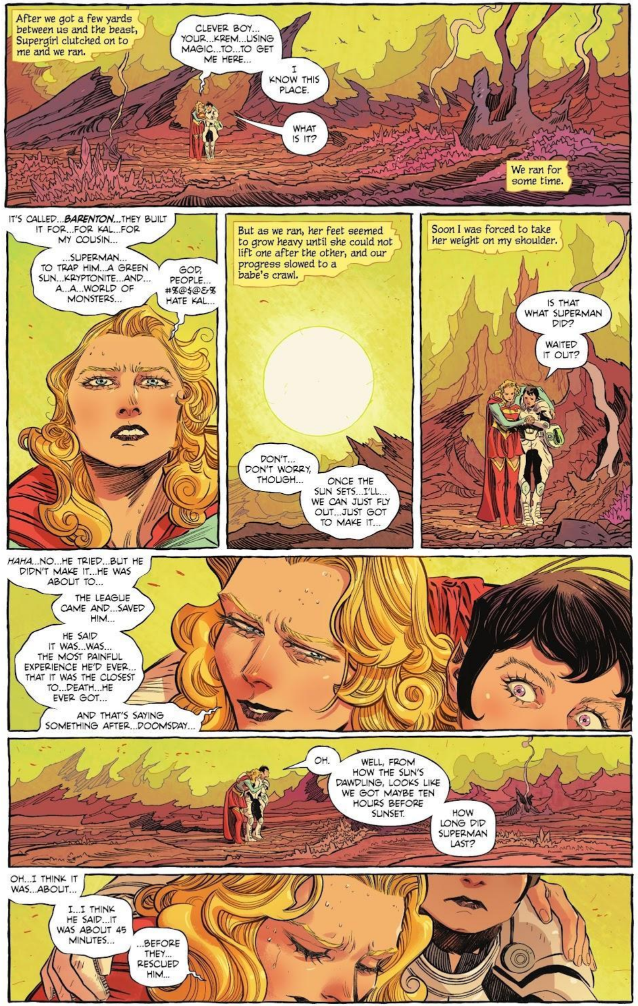

I had not seen the criminal Krem of the Yellow Hills since he cracked me with his heel as he cowered his way onto Supergirl's rocket.
And now, after many months of waiting and many galaxies traveled, here he was again, ringed by the desecrated bodies of the blameless and the innocent.
As we drew nearer that day a bile rose in my throat that I had never experienced before.
Its bitter burn has haunted me from that time to this.
It was the taste of the void.
Of going through each day knowing in the depths of your heart and soul that this day, this moment, requires the company of your father.
And knowing, in the depths of your heart and soul, that you will go through this day, this moment, as you now always will--
--you shall be *alone.*


However, my time in Krem's presence was brief, for just as he was in reach, he threw his Mordru Globe.
WHAT?
Not many people have had the privilege of encountering a genuine Mordru Globe. They are of an odd and rare vintage.
Since my own brush with the fiendish thing, I have done quite a heap of research into their origin and general use.
IT'S MAGIC...I CAN'T...
Broadly speaking--
--for in the practice of magic, rules slip through your fingers as often as the devil slips over your tongue--
--they can only be acquired through a prodigious amount of death.
You see, the actual mystical ceremony used to call the globes to our plane is not particularly complicated or even interesting.
Most amateurs could shuffle their way through those steps, but most amateurs lack the critical ingredient needed for completion of the ritual.
For the globe to manifest at the climax of said dance, one needs the dedication and desecration of thousands of bodies slain with no other purpose in mind.
Something not easy to snag at your local apothecary.
Unlike most, though, Krem had that particular prerequisite at the ready.
POP


The reason a high bar is required for obtaining such a globe is indeed obvious.
The ability to transplant the most powerful beings in the universe billions of miles from their intended destination can transform sure defeat into lauded victory.
POP
Were this method available to any and all, the proper relationship of strength to weakness in the ongoing conflict we call living would be overturned.
Something that would be frowned upon by the originators of magic, if you believe in such folks.
As I surely do.
WHERE...
HNNNN.
For it would end the need for their unique services in upsetting but not negating the order of all things.
#%@$.


Thus it is the rare and cursed few who have traveled inside a Mordru Globe.
And found themselves suddenly on the other side of existence.
NNNN.


RUTH, YOU HAVE TO...MOVE...I'M GOING TO MOVE... I CAN'T...
I'M GOING TO GO QUICKLY... I'LL GRAB YOU...
I'M LOSING MY...I CAN'T HOLD THIS... NOT LONG... I'M...
I'M S-SORRY...
...THE LIGHT...
ARE YOU INJURED?
IT'S THE SUN...
THE SUN IS GREEN.


After we got a few yards between us and the beast, Supergirl clutched on to me and we ran.
CLEVER BOY... YOUR...KREM...USING MAGIC...TO...TO GET ME HERE...
I KNOW THIS PLACE.
WHAT IS IT?
We ran for some time.
IT'S CALLED...*BARENTON*...THEY BUILT IT FOR...FOR KAL...FOR MY COUSIN...
...SUPERMAN... TO TRAP HIM...A GREEN SUN...KRYPTONITE...AND... A...A...WORLD OF MONSTERS...
GOD, PEOPLE... #%@$@&% HATE KAL...
But as we ran, her feet seemed to grow heavy until she could not lift one after the other, and our progress slowed to a babe's crawl.
DON'T... DON'T WORRY, THOUGH...
ONCE THE SUN SETS...I'LL... WE CAN JUST FLY OUT...JUST GOT TO MAKE IT...
Soon I was forced to take her weight on my shoulder.
IS THAT WHAT SUPERMAN DID?
WAITED IT OUT?
HAHA...NO...HE TRIED...BUT HE DIDN'T MAKE IT...HE WAS ABOUT TO...
THE LEAGUE CAME AND...SAVED HIM...
HE SAID IT WAS...WAS... THE MOST PAINFUL EXPERIENCE HE'D EVER... THAT IT WAS THE CLOSEST TO...DEATH...HE EVER GOT...
AND THAT'S SAYING SOMETHING AFTER...DOOMSDAY...
OH.
WELL, FROM HOW THE SUN'S DAWDLING, LOOKS LIKE WE GOT MAYBE TEN HOURS BEFORE SUNSET.
HOW LONG DID SUPERMAN LAST?
OH...I THINK IT WAS...ABOUT...
I...I THINK HE SAID...IT WAS ABOUT 45 MINUTES...
...BEFORE THEY... RESCUED HIM...

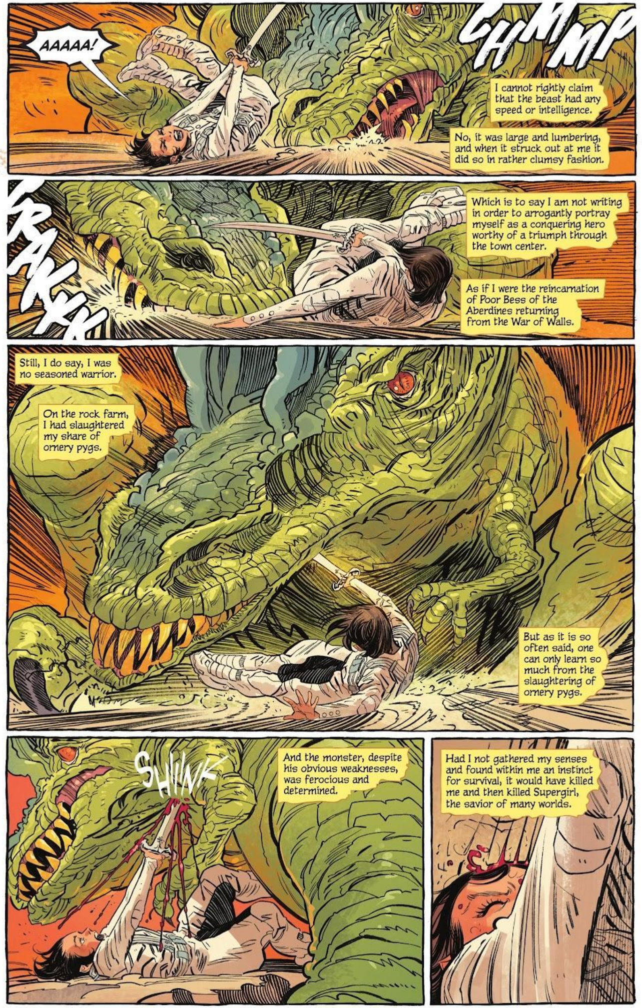

45 MINUTES?
THAT'S WHAT HE SAID...
AND WE'VE GOT TEN HOURS?
SO IT'S... YEAH...45 MINUTES...SO TEN HOURS IS...
...A LITTLE MORE...
#%#@.
HEY, THAT'S GOOD. YOU USED...THAT JUST RIGHT...
PROUD OF...YOU...
BUT...DON'T TELL...KAL I TAUGHT IT TO YOU...HE'D BE...JUDGY.
SOMETIMES I SEE...WHY... PEOPLE #%#@&$ HATE...HIM...


THIS'LL... THIS IS AS FAR... I CAN'T...MY LEGS CAN'T DO IT...
WE'LL STOP HERE...
THIS IS... GOOD...
The design of the world was as simple as it was devious.
YEAH...THANK YOU.
A circle of barren hills surrounding a valley with a freshwater lake at its center.
I'M JUST GOING TO REST... JUST FOR...A...
My genuine instinct was to go to the lake in the hopes that the water and greens there could aid in the restoration of Supergirl's quickly fading health.
IT'S MOVING NOW. MAYBE NINE HOURS.
But I was quickly corrected. Supergirl smartly noted that the same flora that'd help her lured the monsters to its midst.
The relief was simply a trap. She could survive longer without water at the edge dealing with a few strays than she could with it in the midst of the herd.
It would be difficult, but better to endure than to die.
NINE HOURS...THAT'S... NOTHING...
Consequently we walked away from the danger, and we climbed into the hills until she could go no farther.


And so we found our sanctuary.
A small rock cluster where we would make our stand until sunset and escape.
The green rays of the sun hitting her like a thousand poisoned needles, Supergirl laid herself down to rest.
I drew my sword.
And we waited for the monsters to come.

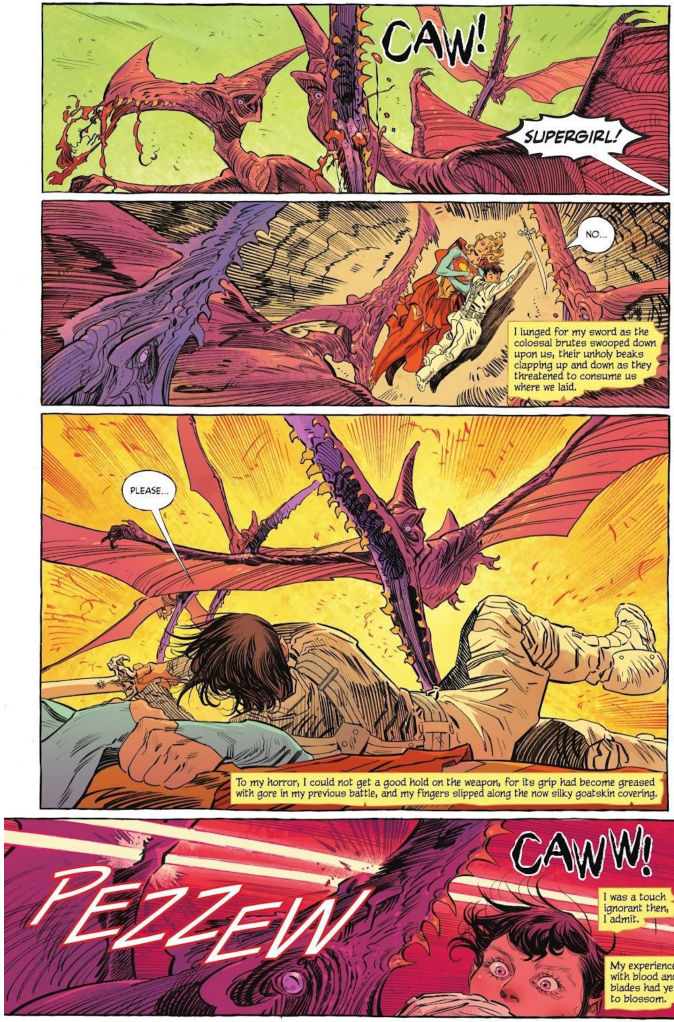

Hours passed.
At times she'd convulse and shout out in misery and then apologize over and over.
At times she'd keep still and whimper.
Then at times, the best times, she'd retreat to the calm of the unconscious and lie silent on the rocks.
It was during one of these moments of amity that the ground let out a soft tremble.
And our waiting came to an end.
YOU STAY THERE, BEAST!
THIS AIN'T NO PLACE FOR YOU!


YOU SHOULD BE MADE AWARE, THIS IS A SWORD OF GREAT WORTH!
AND...AND I PUT FORWARD NO EXAGGERATION WHEN I STATE IT WILL CUT UNMERCIFULLY DEEP!
I WARN YOU, YOU...YOU'RE BETTER OFF NOT FEELING THE CHILL OF ITS IRON SLITTING INTO YOUR GUT!
RRRRRRRRRR
RRRRARRRRRR
YES...YES, IT IS AN IMPRESSIVE BRAY, I ADMIT AS MUCH.
AND HEARING IT NOW, I...I DO INDEED FEAR YOUR WRATH.
YOU MAY TAKE SOME PRIDE IN THAT.
BUT...B-BUT I AM NOT ONE WHO LETS HER F-FEAR HINDER HER ACTIONS.
INDEED, IF ANYTHING, MY RESOLVE IS D-DOUBLED IN THE KNOWING THAT I HAVE BROOKED YOUR ATTEMPT TO PETRIFY ME.
AND...AND HAVE HEARTILY WITHSTOOD IT.
AND I WILL TAKE SOME PRIDE IN THAT.


AAAAA!
CHMMP
I cannot rightly claim that the beast had any speed or intelligence.
No, it was large and lumbering, and when it struck out at me it did so in rather clumsy fashion.
KRAKK
Which is to say I am not writing in order to arrogantly portray myself as a conquering hero worthy of a triumph through the town center.
As if I were the reincarnation of Poor Bess of the Aberdines returning from the War of Walls.
Still, I do say, I was no seasoned warrior.
On the rock farm, I had slaughtered my share of ornery pygs.
But as it is so often said, one can only learn so much from the slaughtering of ornery pygs.
SHIINK
And the monster, despite his obvious weaknesses, was ferocious and determined.
Had I not gathered my senses and found within me an instinct for survival, it would have killed me and then killed Supergirl, the savior of many worlds.


So please forgive me a bit of brag in describing its downfall at my hands.
I DID IT.
IT IS DONE.
YOU HEAR? DON'T YOU WORRY ANY.
NOT SO FAR TO GO NOW.

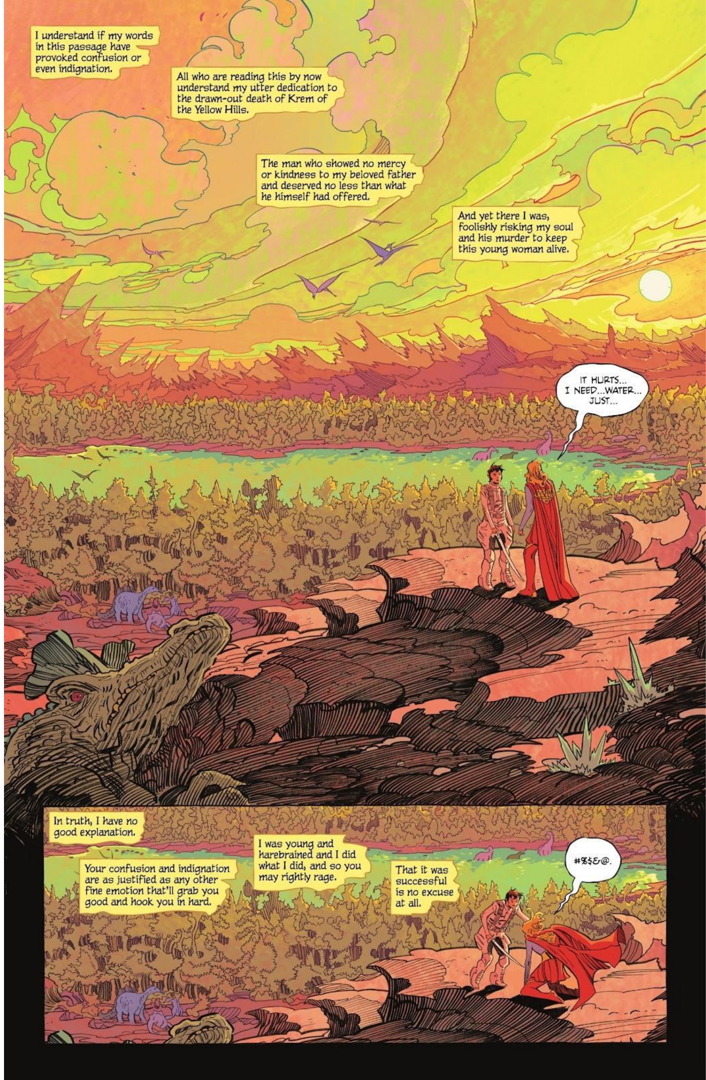

That whole time, I was fortunate in finding myself in an allurement not designed for my people and so had more pep in me than the suffering Supergirl.
Still, my first fight and kill on alien land mightily strained even my natural resources, and I too fell victim to the hard push of my eyelids.
And I rested.
CAW CAW!
For a time.
CAW CAW!
SUPERGIRL...


CAW!
SUPERGIRL!
NO...
I lunged for my sword as the colossal brutes swooped down upon us, their unholy beaks clapping up and down as they threatened to consume us where we laid.
PLEASE...
To my horror, I could not get a good hold on the weapon, for its grip had become greased with gore in my previous battle, and my fingers slipped along the now silky goatskin covering.
PEZZEW
CAWW!
I was a touch ignorant then, I admit.
My experience with blood and blades had yet to blossom.


HEY, WAS THAT...THAT'S A...
IT'S A... #%@$&#@ BIRD...
NO...
IT'S A... PLANE...
OR... NO...
IT'S... SUPER... GIR...

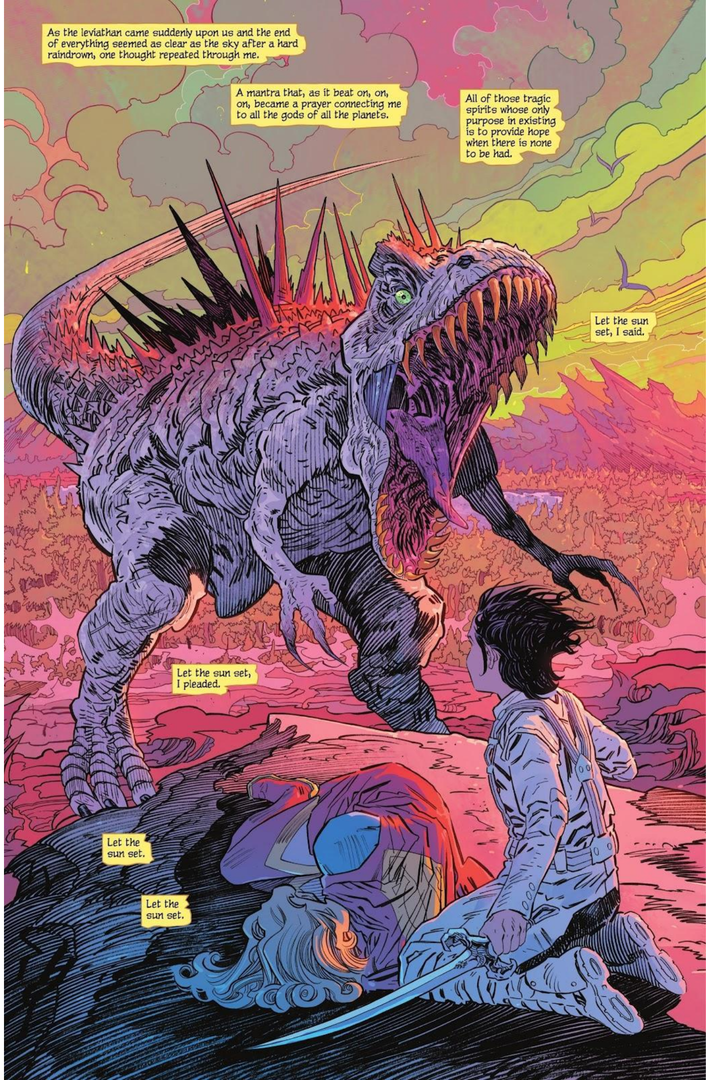

It was thankfully quiet for a while after that, at least in terms of beasts trying to rip their teeth through our flesh.
I passed the time nursing Supergirl, who slept unsoundly, agony wracking her body, shaking her dreams.
I had learned my lesson and maintained my watch now with my weapon dry and at hand.
I saved my own dreams for other days.
COUGH COUGH
WATER... WATER...
NO, NO, YOU NEED TO REST SOME MORE. STAY STILL.
I NEED... PLEASE...WATER... THE LAKE...
JUST LIE BACK DOWN.
'MEMBER? IF WE GO TO THE LAKE AND THERE'S MONSTERS THERE, YOU'LL BE KILLED.
NO...NO... GOING...I NEED... WATER...
I'M GOING TO...I'M DYING... I'M GOING TO GET WATER...
IT'S A TRAP. YOU'RE BEST OFF STAYING HERE.
THOSE ARE YOUR OWN WORDS, AND WE OUGHT TO LIVE BY 'EM!
LITTLE GIRL... JUST...CAN YOU...
GET...GET THE #%@ OUT OF MY WAY...


NO.
I'M SORRY.
BUT I DO NOT BELIEVE I WILL.
I HAVE... I...I...MOVE MOUNTAINS...
I'LL MOVE... YOU.
OH YES. I KNOW IT.
BUT AS MOVING ME AND HIKING ON TO THAT DANGEROUS WATER WILL COST YOU *YOUR* LIFE...
...I SEE NO REASON WHY IT SHOULD NOT ALSO COST ME *MINE.*


I understand if my words in this passage have provoked confusion or even indignation.
All who are reading this by now understand my utter dedication to the drawn-out death of Krem of the Yellow Hills.
The man who showed no mercy or kindness to my beloved father and deserved no less than what he himself had offered.
And yet there I was, foolishly risking my soul and his murder to keep this young woman alive.
IT HURTS... I NEED...WATER... JUST...
In truth, I have no good explanation.
Your confusion and indignation are as justified as any other fine emotion that'll grab you good and hook you in hard.
I was young and harebrained and I did what I did, and so you may rightly rage.
That it was successful is no excuse at all.
#%$&@.

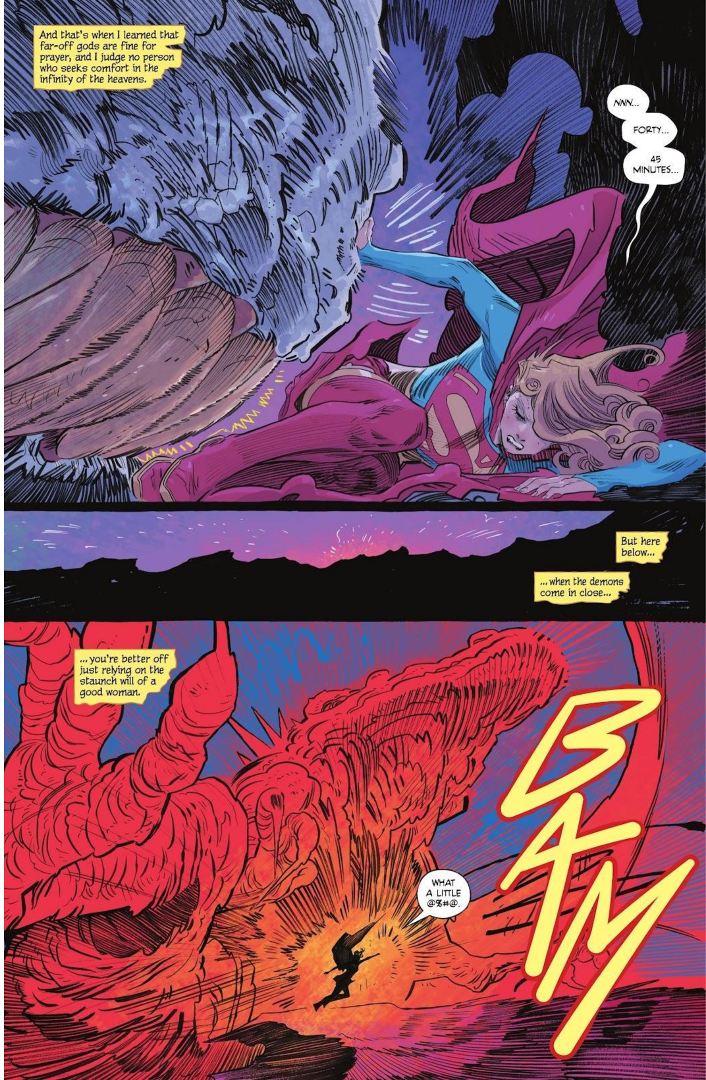


Time passed. My dear companion grew weaker and more pained.
DO YOU SEE IT?
NNN...
I do not wish to write any more about that, for it fills me with grief to relive the hours of anguish Supergirl then suffered.
THAT SUN'S GOING TO DIP ANY SECOND. NO MORE GREEN. YOU'LL START FEELING BETTER. IT'S ALL GOING TO BE ALL RIGHT.
YOU'LL BE GOOD AND YOU'LL GET UP AND WE'LL JUST FLY OFF AND GET BACK IN THAT GOOD HUNT.
NN... NNN.
Just know that she was in desperate need and I could do nothing.
NNN...
WE'RE ALMOST THERE.
And let us proceed to the end of it.
ALMOST...
STOMMP
NO...

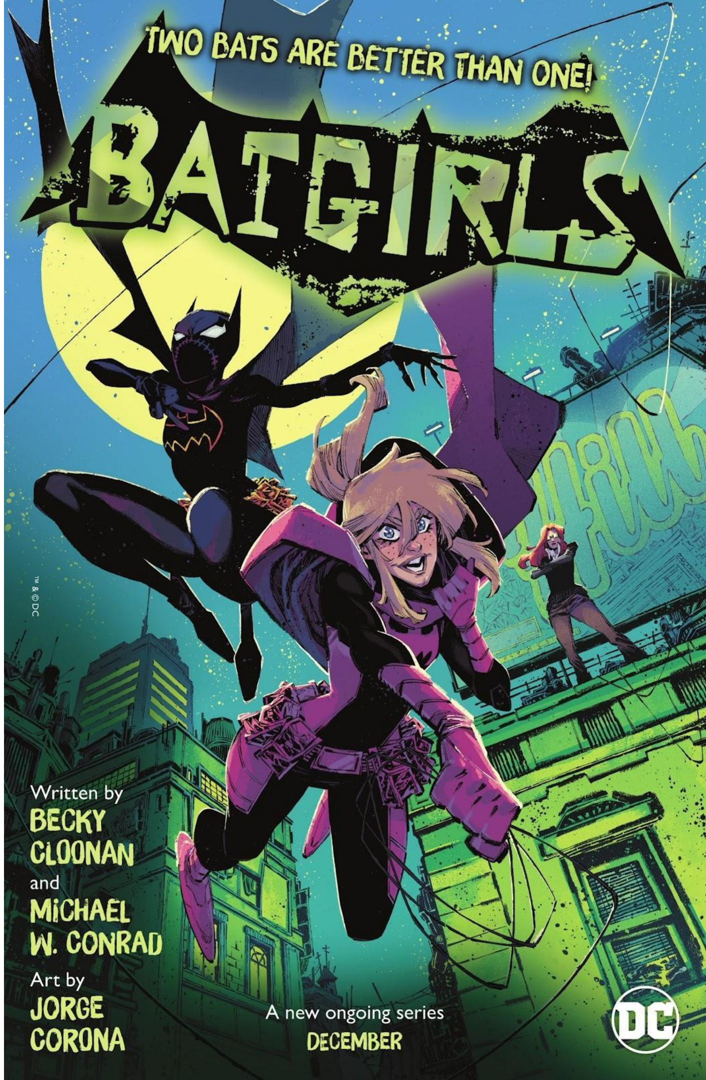


As the leviathan came suddenly upon us and the end of everything seemed as clear as the sky after a hard raindrown, one thought repeated through me.
A mantra that, as it beat on, on, on, became a prayer connecting me to all the gods of all the planets.
All of those tragic spirits whose only purpose in existing is to provide hope when there is none to be had.
Let the sun set, I said.
Let the sun set, I pleaded.
Let the sun set.
Let the sun set.


C'mon. It's almost there.
It's just got to move no more than a few hairs off a gravelmule's back.
AAAAAAA!
Let the sun set.
After it falls, Supergirl will have her powers, at least some of them.
And she'll battle back with a ferocity unmatched by even the Weighted Warriors of the Light Caves.
GRAKKK
NNNN--
A few slips in the sky more. That's all we need.
That's all I ask for.
Let the sun set.
But though surely I sent my words to the ends of the cosmos, where the stars fade into poems and those of the great beyond stare down at our comings and goings...
...they fell on deaf ears.
Or if they were heard, they were laughed at and dismissed without consideration.
RUTHYE...
For the sun remained stubbornly above the hills.
And death was assured.
I...


And that's when I learned that far-off gods are fine for prayer, and I judge no person who seeks comfort in the infinity of the heavens.
NNN...
FORTY...
45 MINUTES...
But here below...
...when the demons come in close...
...you're better off just relying on the staunch will of a good woman.
WHAT A LITTLE @%#@.
BAM

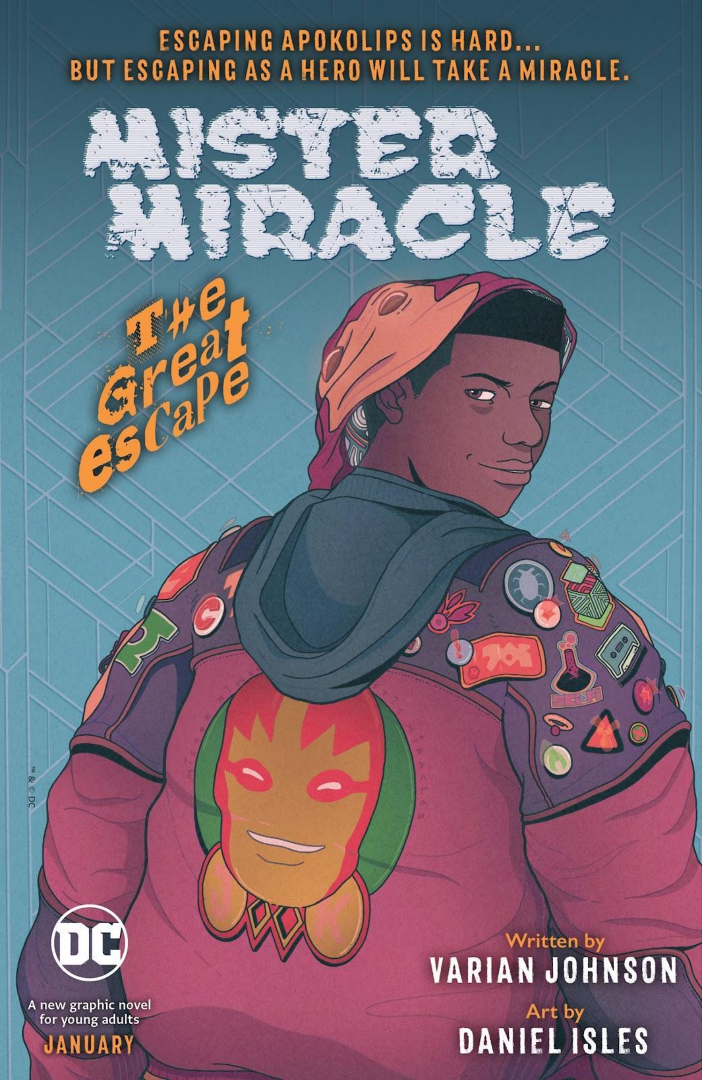

Later, that bullheaded green star finally conceded to the horizon.
And Supergirl's strength returned.
DC Comics Presents:
We had made it through the day and into the night.
Supergirl: Woman of Tomorrow
Chapter Five: "The Lake, the Trees, and the Monsters"
Which I suppose is all one ever does.
Tom King -- Writer
Bilquis Evely -- Artist
Matheus Lopes -- Colorist
Clayton Cowles -- Letterer
Evely & Lopes -- Cover
Amy Reeder -- Variant Cover
Brittany Holzherr -- Editor
Mike Cotton -- Senior Editor
Nevertheless, I was--
--and I remain--
--grateful to have once again completed that barbarous journey.
Supergirl based on the characters created by Jerry Siegel & Joe Shuster. By special arrangement with the Jerry Siegel Family.
To Be Continued.


TWO BATS ARE BETTER THAN ONE!
BATGIRLS
Written by
BECKY CLOONAN
and
MICHAEL W. CONRAD
Art by
JORGE CORONA
A new ongoing series
DECEMBER


He's back. Whoever he is.
RORSCHACH
Written by
TOM KING
Art by
JORGE FORNÉS
RORSCHACH
TOM KING JORGE FORNÉS DAVE STEWART
A graphic novel collection
of the acclaimed series
DC
BLACK LABEL
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DC
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ESCAPING APOKOLIPS IS HARD...
BUT ESCAPING AS A HERO WILL TAKE A MIRACLE.
MISTER MIRACLE
The Great escape
Written by
VARIAN JOHNSON
Art by
DANIEL ISLES
A new graphic novel for young adults
JANUARY
™ & © DC


IN UNDERSTANDING BINOMIAL COAGULATIONS, WE MUST FIRST REVERSE-FACTOR INFINITES ALONG HEXAGONAL SURFACES.
NOW, THIS IS A 3D MODELING OF THIS PROBLEM. OF COURSE, WE WILL COVER 4D VARIANTS IN THE NEXT CHAPTER WHEN--
FRIEND, THE *BRIGANDS* HAVE THIS RULE THAT YOU CAN SPOUT LAST WORDS IF YOU PAY FOR 'EM.
YOU GOT ANY MONEY?
WH-WHAT...
"WHAT."
AIN'T *THAT* A LAST WORD. AND I CAN'T RECALL GETTING PAYMENT.
WHICH IS A VIOLATION OF THE RULE I JUST DAMN EXPLAINED.


On the way from Barenton to Urrralann, she told her story.
For the first and last time.
I'm sure you've heard it.
NNNN.
But you didn't ever hear it from her.
NN NN.

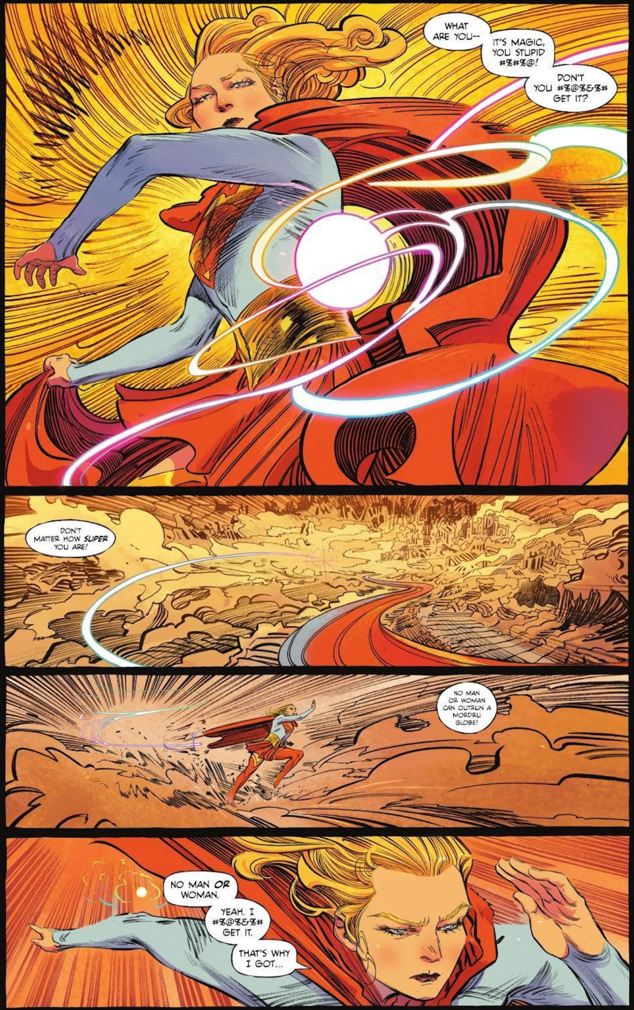

She wasn't the baby who went off in the rocket.
SHE'S HERE!
MOVE!
WHERE?!
DO YOU THINK I KNOW?! SHE CAN MOVE FASTER THAN--
AAAAAAAA!
KREM!
She was the schoolgirl who knew Krypton as home, family, and refuge.



I KNOW YOU'RE THERE!
I'VE GOT ANOTHER MORDRU GLOBE!
YOU WANT TO PLAY THIS GAME AGAIN?!
WHERE WILL YOU GO...
...THIS...
...TIME?
She lived in her world.
And she saw it die.
HELLO, I'M SUPERGIRL.
AND YOU'RE KREM OF THE YELLOW HILLS.
YOU SHOT MY #%@%&%# DOG.
AAAAAAA!

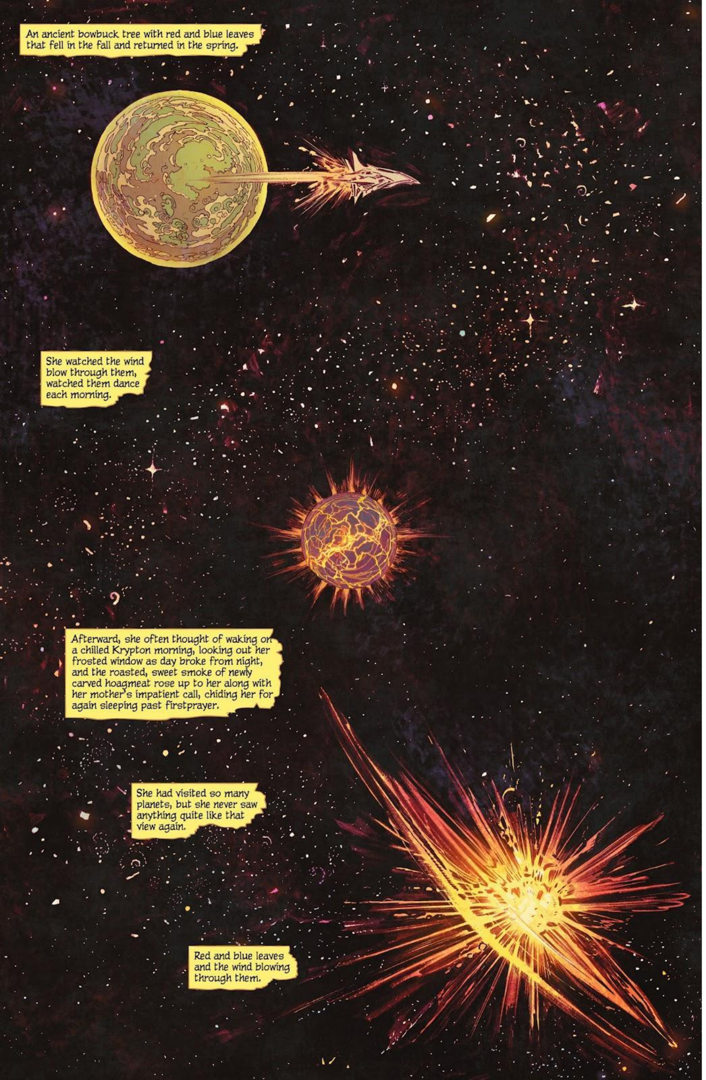


DC Comics Presents:
Supergirl: Woman of Tomorrow
Chapter Six: "Home, Family, and Refuge"
As she started telling it, I asked why.
Why me? Why now?
She said she'd barely survived the last attempt to get Krem, and she had doubts she'd survive this next one.
She just figured before she passed, someone ought to know.
Tom King -- Writer
Bilquis Evely -- Artist
Matheus Lopes -- Colorist
Clayton Cowles -- Letterer
Evely & Lopes -- Cover
Steve Rude -- Variant Cover
Jillian Grant -- Asst. Editor
Brittany Holzherr -- Editor
Mike Cotton -- Senior Editor
Supergirl based on the characters created by Jerry Siegel & Joe Shuster.
By special arrangement with the Jerry Siegel Family.


WHAT ARE YOU--
IT'S MAGIC, YOU STUPID #%#%@!
DON'T YOU #%@%&%# GET IT?
DON'T MATTER HOW **SUPER** YOU ARE!
NO MAN OR WOMAN CAN OUTRUN A MORDRU GLOBE!
NO MAN **OR** WOMAN.
YEAH. I #%@%&%# GET IT.
THAT'S WHY I GOT...

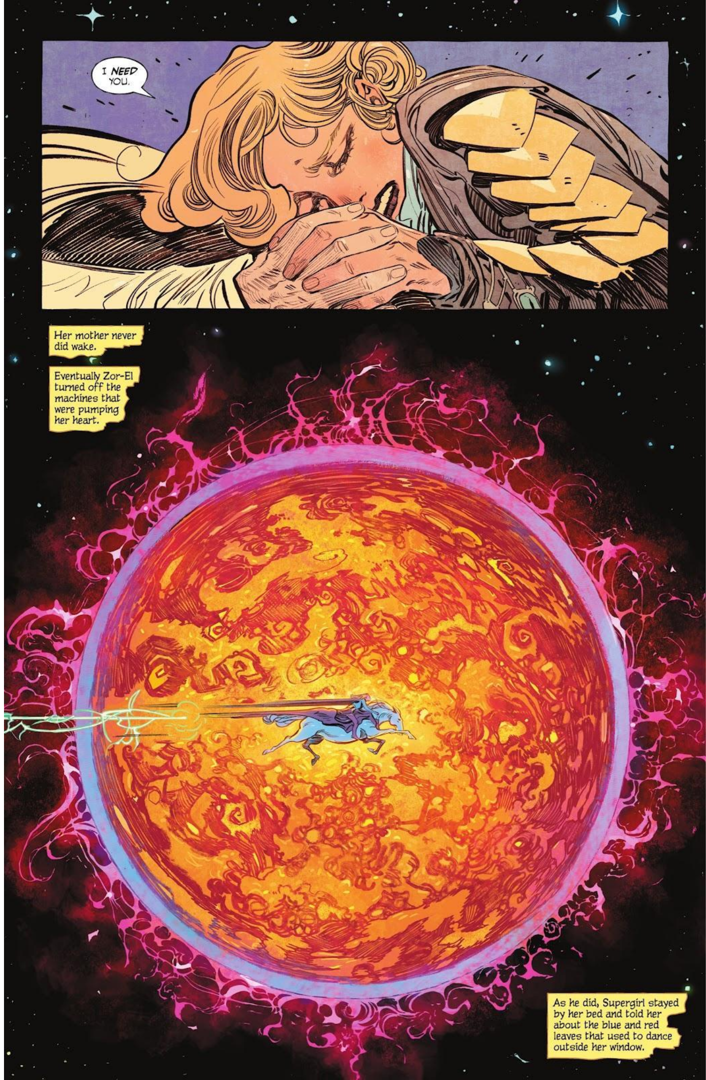

NEIGGHMMM.
ALL RIGHT, **COMET.**
TO THE END OF THE UNIVERSE AND A LITTLE BIT FARTHER.
FAST AS YOUR FEET'LL TAKE YOU.
HYAAAAA!
NEEIGGHHHH!


The quakes came hard and swift as she walked home from school. She could hardly keep upright.
The streets cracked and she watched dozens of her neighbors consumed by waves of steel and crystal, screaming for help as they were dragged into the fiery depths of Krypton.
She kept walking.
A man called out to her. She turned, seeing someone familiar, the manager of a local solarfuel store.
A chunk of rock had cleaved through his belly and he was clutching on to his guts, trying to stuff them back in place.
He told her he couldn't hold on, it was all slipping through his fingers, and he begged for her help--could she just put her hand here, that's all, just a little help.
He fell at her feet, and there was blood on her boots.
She kept walking.
She passed a rocket-stroller tipped over and she did not hear any cries from the babe who must have been inside.
Maybe its mother had taken it to someplace good and safe, or maybe its pain was mercifully over and its eyes shut forever, or maybe it was keeping still because the clatter of ruin had grown too loud and that was just its instinct in that moment.
Supergirl never found out.
She kept walking.
Krypton had held thousands of generations safe in its bosom.
Epics were written. Idols were worshipped. Wars were waged. Children were born. Dead were mourned. Heroes were celebrated. Stars were discovered. Histories were researched. Lands were conquered. Families were raised.
The edifices of ambition were built and destroyed and built again and destroyed again and built again and destroyed again...
There was love and jealousy and hope and tears and agony and laughter.
There was the view out her window in her room in her apartment.


An ancient bowbuck tree with red and blue leaves that fell in the fall and returned in the spring.
She watched the wind blow through them, watched them dance each morning.
Afterward, she often thought of waking on a chilled Krypton morning, looking out her frosted window as day broke from night, and the roasted, sweet smoke of newly carved hoagmeat rose up to her along with her mother's impatient call, chiding her for again sleeping past firstprayer.
She had visited so many planets, but she never saw anything quite like that view again.
Red and blue leaves and the wind blowing through them.


Krypton did not die in a day.
The gods are not that kind.
C'MON, BOY. C'MON. JUST A LITTLE FASTER.
PLEASE.


The minute chunk of the planet that held Argo City was spit out in the initial explosion.
Most of the city's citizens died in the breakage, but some endured.
Zor-El, a famed scientist of the city--who happened to be Supergirl's father--was able to bubble enough atmosphere for those lucky folks left on the asteroid to survive.
For a while.
DON'T CRY, SWEETIE...IT'S OKAY.
JUST... I LOVE YOU... JUST BE...
BE... ...GOOD...
MOTHER?
MOTHER, WAKE UP. MOTHER, NO!
MOTHER, DON'T, PLEASE, YOU CAN'T...


I NEED YOU.
Her mother never did wake.
Eventually Zor-El turned off the machines that were pumping her heart.
As he did, Supergirl stayed by her bed and told her about the blue and red leaves that used to dance outside her window.


The diagnosis was radiation poisoning. Zor-El discovered the cause.
Starlight from approaching yellow suns had changed the chemical composition of the rocks carrying them.
The sod beneath their feet was poisoning them.
Zor-El's solution was to mass-produce lead shields and spread them over every nook and cranny of exposed land.
A makeshift wall between them and the contagion.
People were dying and the task was massive.
Every hand was required.

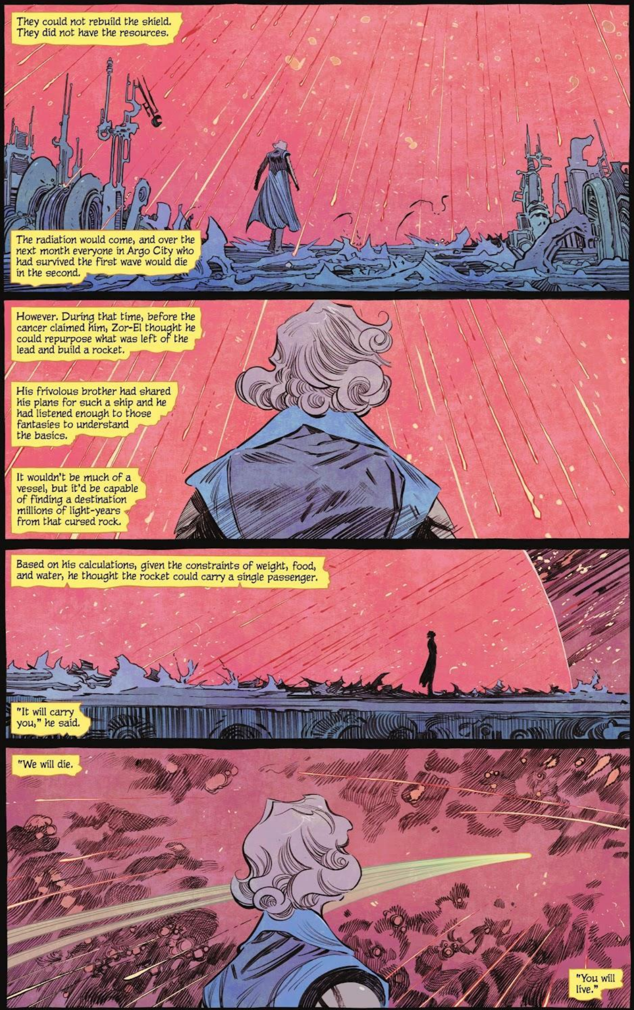

By the end of the first hour--or how they defined the hours then, clinging to the twists of a now-lost world--her wrist ached and blood from broken blisters dripped down her arm.
She switched hands and kept going.
By the end of the first forty hours of uninterrupted work, sleep came hard for her and she could not keep her eyes open.
She slammed her hammer into her thigh, breaking the skin there.
The snap of pain woke her enough, and she gathered some more lead.
By the end of the first eighty hours, the mass of helpers had conceded to exhaustion and acknowledged the impossibility of the task.
Thousands of Kryptonians, the last of their planet, lay fallow throughout the rock, mourning their inevitable coming death.
So she worked alone.


The wall of lead was completed in three weeks.
Of the eighteen thousand citizens still alive in Argo City after the destruction of Krypton, about thirteen thousand eventually died of Kryptonite poisoning.
When she was done hammering all the lead plates, Supergirl turned her attention to building crypts.
Including her mother's.


A year went by and she survived the best she could, keeping mostly to herself, tired of befriending the dying.
They could not steer the rock, and so they floated hither and thither through the depths of space relying on prayer and fate.
She remembered the day the storm came. She heard it before she saw it. Said it was actually fairly pleasant at first.
There was no rain in space and the plinking of the rocks hitting the lead reminded her of days stuck at home with nothing to do but read and look out that window.
The wet on the red and blue leaves.
Out her window that day she saw the asteroids fall, the hail stones puncturing their improvised shield.
She knew the radiation had come back, that those left would soon be leaving.
And that was the end of her ever relying on prayer and fate.



She found her father in his lab weeping. As with many men of his generation, he was a man who frowned upon emotional expression.
She had never seen him with so much as a tear in his eye before, even as they stood over her mother's body.
She asked him--
IS THERE HOPE?
And he said--
THERE IS ALWAYS HOPE.
FOR YOU.

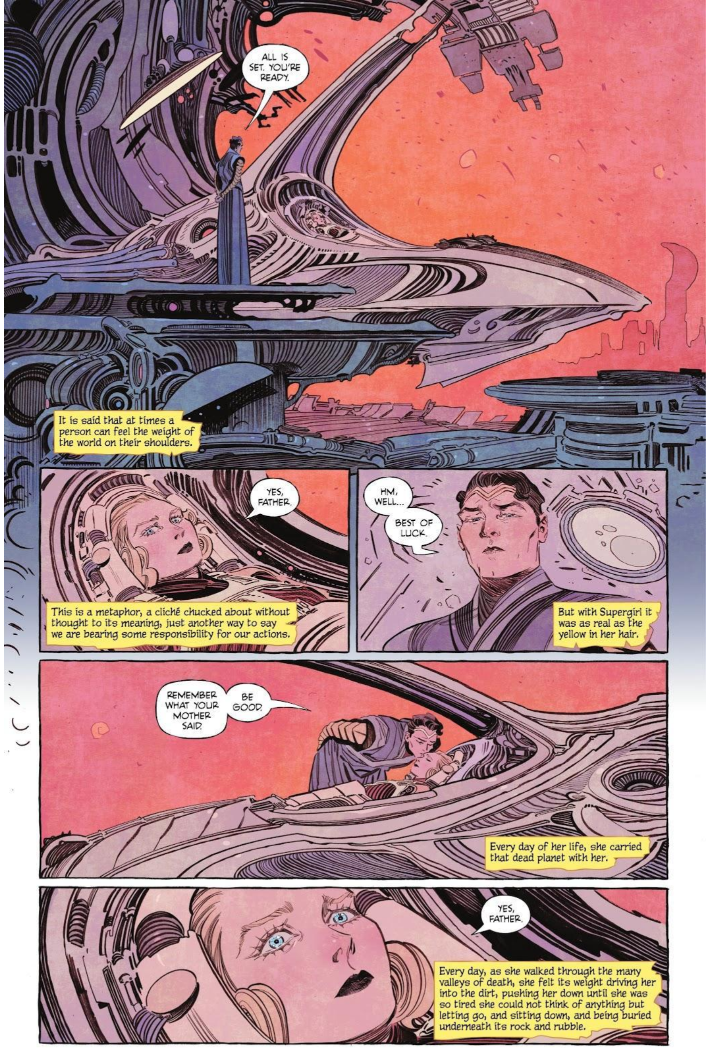


They could not rebuild the shield. They did not have the resources.
The radiation would come, and over the next month everyone in Argo City who had survived the first wave would die in the second.
However. During that time, before the cancer claimed him, Zor-El thought he could repurpose what was left of the lead and build a rocket.
His frivolous brother had shared his plans for such a ship and he had listened enough to those fantasies to understand the basics.
It wouldn't be much of a vessel, but it'd be capable of finding a destination millions of light-years from that cursed rock.
Based on his calculations, given the constraints of weight, food, and water, he thought the rocket could carry a single passenger.
"It will carry you," he said.
"We will die.
"You will live."


"Why me?"
She asked.
"You are my little girl."
He said.
"And I will save you."
"No."
She said.
"What I have seen... how can I still be a little girl?"
"Tomorrow will come soon enough."
He said.
"And I will pass and this place will pass and stars will fall and suns will rise.
"And you will be a woman looking back on the many decades of your life, the terrors and the triumphs.
"And perhaps you will think of your father then and perhaps you will remember whatever has happened, whatever pain you have ever endured...
"...you are still my little girl."

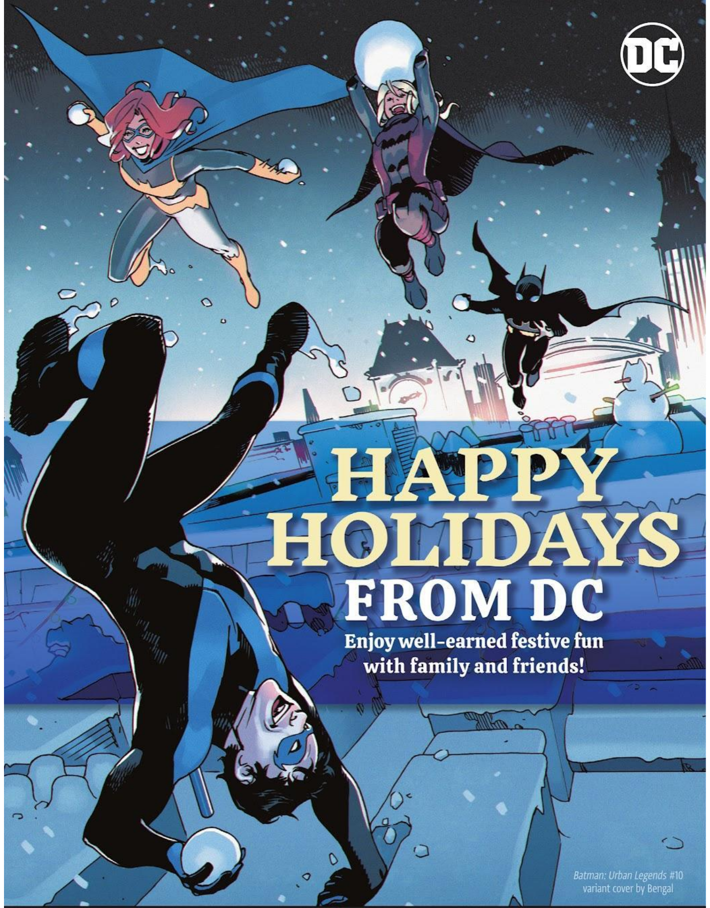

For the next month, Zor-El pieced together the rocket and Supergirl cared for the sick, trying to bring them comfort as the poison claimed their bodies.
It was her third time watching the light of life fade around her.
Her third time hearing her neighbors grasp for their last breaths.
Her third time collecting bodies for mass burial.
Her third time watching her world die.
She was fourteen.


WHOAAAA, COMET, WHOOA.
THAT'S IT, GOOD.
THAT'S ENOUGH.
SO, LITTLE MORDRU GLOBE, HELL OF A CHASE.
YOU SHOULD BE PROUD. IT'S NOT YOUR FAULT.
MAGIC IS A TRICKY THING. TOO TRICKY FOR ME SOMETIMES.
BUT I KNOW THIS MUCH AT LEAST. WHAT WORKS BACK THERE...
...DOESN'T NECESSARILY WORK HERE.
POP


ALL IS SET. YOU'RE READY.
It is said that at times a person can feel the weight of the world on their shoulders.
YES, FATHER.
HM, WELL...
BEST OF LUCK.
This is a metaphor, a cliché chucked about without thought to its meaning, just another way to say we are bearing some responsibility for our actions.
But with Supergirl it was as real as the yellow in her hair.
REMEMBER WHAT YOUR MOTHER SAID.
BE GOOD.
Every day of her life, she carried that dead planet with her.
YES, FATHER.
Every day, as she walked through the many valleys of death, she felt its weight driving her into the dirt, pushing her down until she was so tired she could not think of anything but letting go, and sitting down, and being buried underneath its rock and rubble.

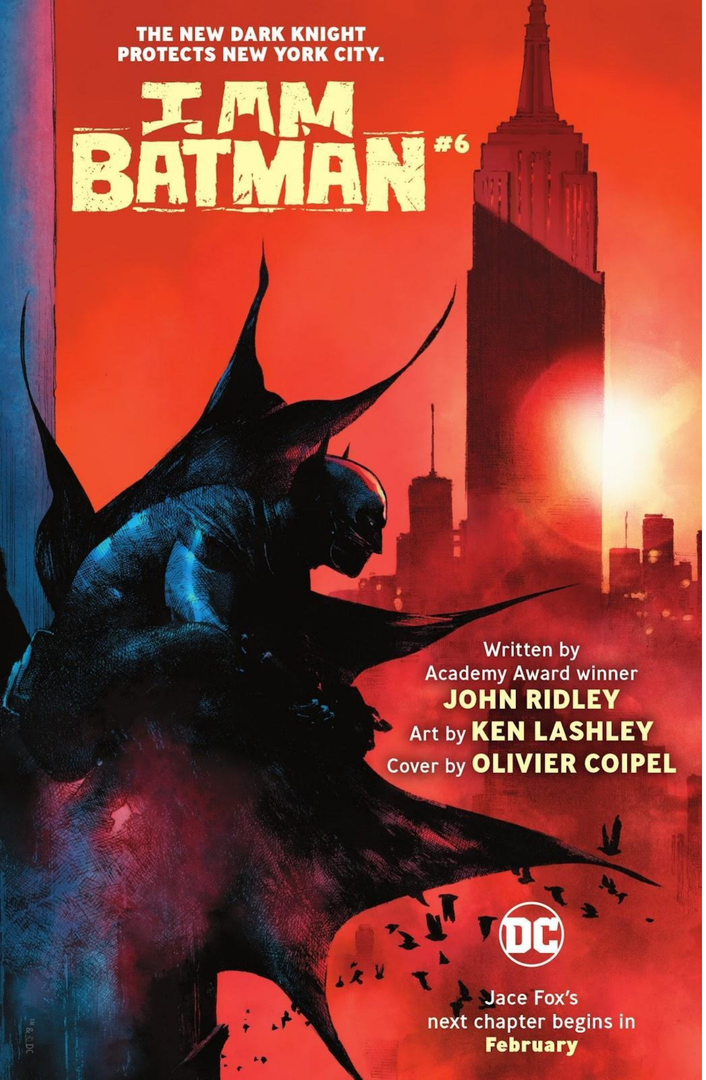


And every day she kept on walking.
"Be good," her mother had said.
NO...
AIN'T YOU AFRAID HE HAS ANOTHER MORDRU GLOBE?
NOT REALLY. YOU CAN ONLY HAVE ONE AT A TIME AND THEY'RE REALLY HARD TO MAKE.
"There is always hope," her father had said.
HE PROBABLY DIDN'T HAVE THE TIME.
SO ALL HE HAS IS A SWORD AND ARROWS.
YEAH, PRETTY MUCH.
But I do not believe that is what drives her inevitably forward.
EWWIIISSH
WELL, THAT'S TROUBLE.
I MEAN, 'CAUSE YOU'RE SUPERGIRL.
No, like many whose childhoods were ripped away from them, she is eternally searching for something.
Perhaps justice. Perhaps explanation. Perhaps...
AND YOU DON'T GIVE A #%@ ABOUT SWORDS AND ARROWS.
Perhaps a tree outside her window, red and blue leaves and the wind that blows between them.
To Be Continued.

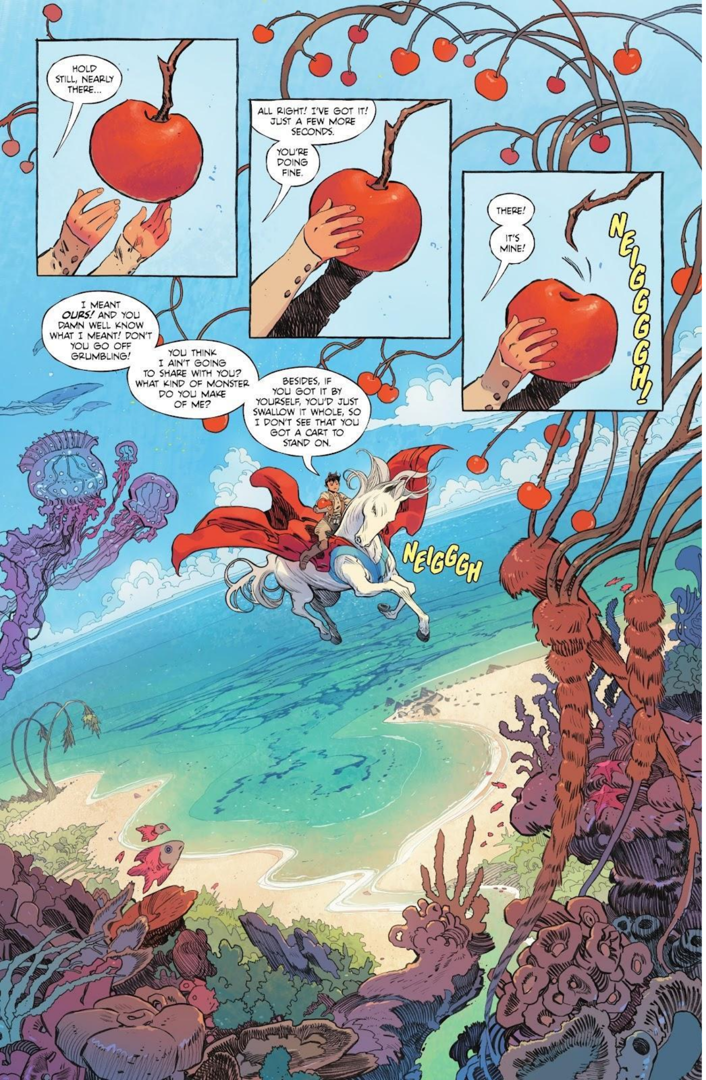


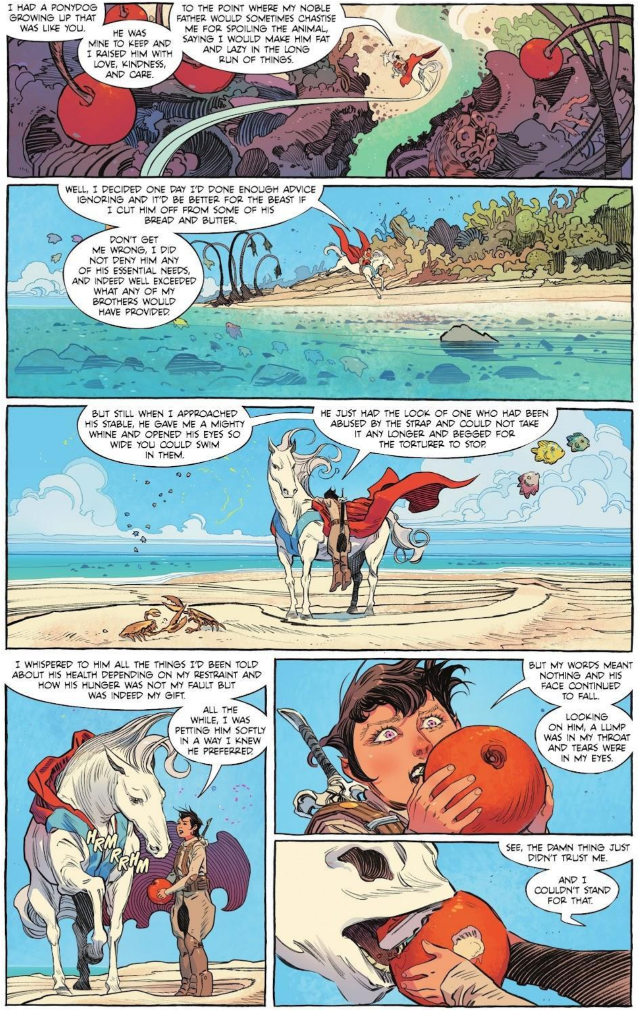
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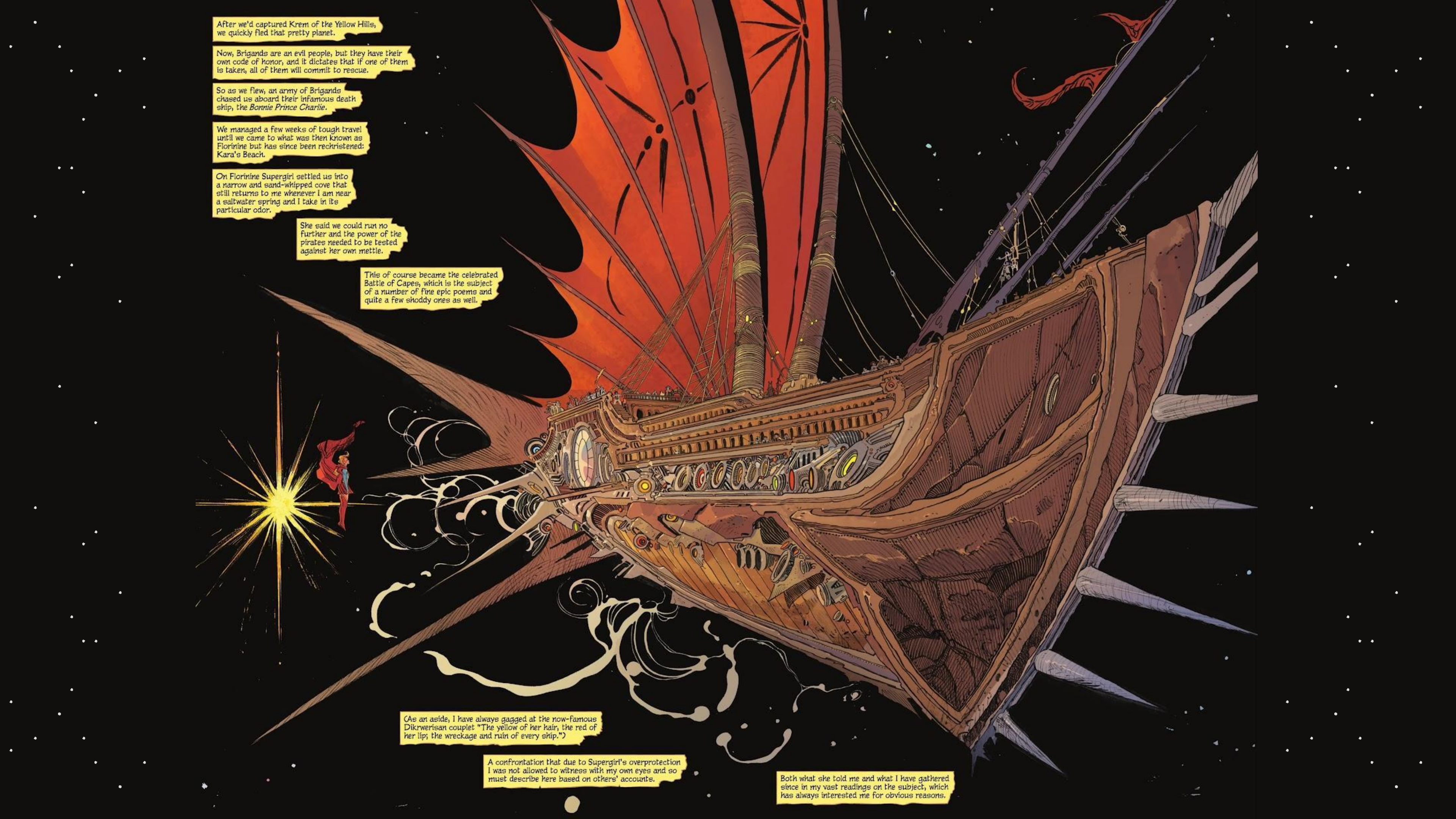

SUPERGIRL
WOMAN OF TOMORROW
7 of 8
KING
EVELY
LOPES
AGES 13+
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THE NEW DARK KNIGHT
PROTECTS NEW YORK CITY.
I AM BATMAN #6
Written by
Academy Award winner
JOHN RIDLEY
Art by KEN LASHLEY
Cover by OLIVIER COIPEL
Jace Fox's
next chapter begins in
February


This next section required a prodigious amount of research on my part and I hope you will appreciate that.
For up to this moment I have been recounting my own observations from those many decades ago when I was young and still had in me some of that good fortune and fear that all young folk carry and hide from those who say they know better but really just know they were once satisfied to dream and are now calcified into lives of regret and sorrow.
But now I must lead you beyond my experience.


HOLD STILL, NEARLY THERE...
ALL RIGHT! I'VE GOT IT! JUST A FEW MORE SECONDS.
YOU'RE DOING FINE.
THERE!
IT'S MINE!
NEIGGGGH!
I MEANT *OURS!* AND YOU DAMN WELL KNOW WHAT I MEANT! DON'T YOU GO OFF GRUMBLING!
YOU THINK I AIN'T GOING TO SHARE WITH YOU? WHAT KIND OF MONSTER DO YOU MAKE OF ME?
BESIDES, IF YOU GOT IT BY YOURSELF, YOU'D JUST SWALLOW IT WHOLE, SO I DON'T SEE THAT YOU GOT A CART TO STAND ON.
NEIGGGH


I HAD A PONYDOG GROWING UP THAT WAS LIKE YOU.
HE WAS MINE TO KEEP AND I RAISED HIM WITH LOVE, KINDNESS, AND CARE.
TO THE POINT WHERE MY NOBLE FATHER WOULD SOMETIMES CHASTISE ME FOR SPOILING THE ANIMAL, SAYING I WOULD MAKE HIM FAT AND LAZY IN THE LONG RUN OF THINGS.
WELL, I DECIDED ONE DAY I'D DONE ENOUGH ADVICE IGNORING AND IT'D BE BETTER FOR THE BEAST IF I CUT HIM OFF FROM SOME OF HIS BREAD AND BUTTER.
DON'T GET ME WRONG, I DID NOT DENY HIM ANY OF HIS ESSENTIAL NEEDS, AND INDEED WELL EXCEEDED WHAT ANY OF MY BROTHERS WOULD HAVE PROVIDED.
BUT STILL WHEN I APPROACHED HIS STABLE, HE GAVE ME A MIGHTY WHINE AND OPENED HIS EYES SO WIDE YOU COULD SWIM IN THEM.
HE JUST HAD THE LOOK OF ONE WHO HAD BEEN ABUSED BY THE STRAP AND COULD NOT TAKE IT ANY LONGER AND BEGGED FOR THE TORTURER TO STOP.
I WHISPERED TO HIM ALL THE THINGS I'D BEEN TOLD ABOUT HIS HEALTH DEPENDING ON MY RESTRAINT AND HOW HIS HUNGER WAS NOT MY FAULT BUT WAS INDEED MY GIFT.
ALL THE WHILE, I WAS PETTING HIM SOFTLY IN A WAY I KNEW HE PREFERRED.
HRMRRHM
BUT MY WORDS MEANT NOTHING AND HIS FACE CONTINUED TO FALL.
LOOKING ON HIM, A LUMP WAS IN MY THROAT AND TEARS WERE IN MY EYES.
SEE, THE DAMN THING JUST DIDN'T TRUST ME.
AND I COULDN'T STAND FOR THAT.


After we'd captured Krem of the Yellow Hills, we quickly fled that pretty planet.
Now, Brigands are an evil people, but they have their own code of honor, and it dictates that if one of them is taken, all of them will commit to rescue.
So as we flew, an army of Brigands chased us aboard their infamous death ship, the *Bonnie Prince Charlie*.
We managed a few weeks of tough travel until we came to what was then known as Florinine but has since been rechristened: Kara's Beach.
On Florinine Supergirl settled us into a narrow and sand-whipped cove that still returns to me whenever I am near a saltwater spring and I take in its particular odor.
She said we could run no further and the power of the pirates needed to be tested against her own mettle.
This of course became the celebrated Battle of Capes, which is the subject of a number of fine epic poems and quite a few shoddy ones as well.
(As an aside, I have always gagged at the now-famous Dikrwerisan couplet "The yellow of her hair, the red of her lip; the wreckage and ruin of every ship.")
A confrontation that due to Supergirl's overprotection I was not allowed to witness with my own eyes and so must describe here based on others' accounts.
Both what she told me and what I have gathered since in my vast readings on the subject, which has always interested me for obvious reasons.


THE PROBLEM IS TRUST. THAT'S WHY YOU'RE HERE, AIN'T IT?
I MEAN, WHATEVER SHE'S CURRENTLY FACING IN THE SKY, SHE'D BE BETTER OFF IF SHE WAS DOING IT RIDING A SUPER-HORSE.
I'D THINK.
BUT INSTEAD SHE LEAVES YOU HERE UNDER THE AUSPICES OF BEING MY FAIR PROTECTOR.
NOW, I'M NOT SAYING I AIN'T GRATEFUL, AND I'M NOT EVEN CLAIMING TO BE SO INDEPENDENT AS NOT TO REQUIRE SOME ASSISTANCE IN FACING AN INVASION OF BRIGANDS.
I AM UNAFRAID, BUT I AIN'T STUPID.
I'M JUST SAYING ALL THAT IS SECONDARY, A RUSE IF YOU WILL, TO HIDE HER PRIMARY CONCERN.
FOR SUPERGIRL, AS YOU WELL KNOW, IS A SHREWD THINKER AND KNOWS THE TRUTH OF EACH MATTER AS WELL AS I DO.
KREM OF THE YELLOW HILLS HAS YET TO GIVE US THE SECRET TO SAVING THE PUP, KRYPTO.
BUT NOW, BEING LEFT ALONE WITH HIM, THERE IS A QUESTION OF WHETHER I HAVE THE PATIENCE TO WAIT FOR THIS INFORMATION.
OR WHETHER I SHALL TAKE FULL ADVANTAGE OF THIS RARE OPPORTUNITY...


...TO KILL HIM.
I UNDERSTAND YOU MAY CLAIM I AM PARANOID.
SO ALLOW ME TO DEMONSTRATE SUPERGIRL'S TRUST IN ME.
NOW, AS IT STANDS...
...IN ABOUT TWO SECONDS I WILL HAVE KREM'S...
...HEAD.
NEEEIGHHH!
UH-HUH.


It is nothing but easy to assume that in any battle with a super-whatever--
--be it man, girl, boy, horse, cat, dog, or monkey--
--an opponent armed with traditional weapons will fall soon enough.
These super-types, if the need arises, and it sometimes does, are capable of hauling stars from one solar system to another.
Rumor has it they are faster than a speeding bullet, stronger than a locomotive, and able to leap tall buildings in a single bound.
Be honest. How many bounds does it take you?
And so this story of Supergirl fighting a bunch of Brigands and their fancy guns seems boring from the start.
There's no risk in the thing.
It's just a matter of waiting for power to manifest itself and good to triumph over evil.
So I understand your frustration.
Given the self-evident outcome, what is even the point of my continuing on this topic?


Well, the truth is, and this is something you learn through a long and fitful life--
No one has a monopoly on power.
If the need arises, and a super-person is not in the vicinity, there are other ways to haul stars from here to there.
There are faster bullets.
There are stronger locomotives.
There are taller buildings.
It is a universe of wonders and mysteries, and being born under one sun and raised under another does not mean you have mastered its limits.
Others have been here long before you, and others will be here long after.
They too have struggled. They too have persevered.
They too can fight.
So what is the point of continuing?
This is the question of a fool who has never hit a man in the face knowing that one hit won't do it and the next thing that's going to happen is that man is going to hit you right back as hard as he damn well can.
And you will taste your own blood before this day is ended.



MMM MM RMM MMMRRR!
AM I AT LEAST ALLOWED TO TALK WITH THE MAN?
FOR ALL WE KNOW, ABSENT THE INTIMIDATION OF SUPERGIRL, HE IS READY TO CONFESS HIS SINS AND GIVE UP THE INFORMATION NEEDED FOR THE SAFETY OF THE PUP.
OPPORTUNITY MAY INDEED BE KNOCKING AND I HAVE A RESPONSIBILITY TO ANSWER THAT DOOR.
MMR FJGMM MMRHG!
WHAT HARM CAN COME?
ARE YOU NOT HERE? ARE YOU NOT A SKILLED WARRIOR DETERMINED IN HIS MISSION?
AM I NOT BUT A YOUNG CHILD OUT OF HER DEPTH IN A SEA OF VIOLENCE AND DESPAIR?
MAYBE HE'S ASKING FOR WATER OR MERCY. WHAT WOULD SUPERGIRL DO?
JUST LET HIM GAB ON INTO CLOTH?
NEEIGGGH.
THANK YOU.
YOU ARE A SUPER-HORSE IN MORE WAYS THAN ONE.



RMM.
THAT YOU, GIRL?! THE ROCK FARM $#@#?!
NO, IT IS OTHAN, LEADER OF THE BRIGANDS, HERE TO RESCUE YOU FROM YOUR CURRENT MISERY.
FORGIVE THE CHANGE IN VOICE, BUT SUPERGIRL HAS RIPPED THE DEAR PEBBLES FROM MY GROIN.
OH, HOW I MISS THEM SO.
THE COARSE HUMOR OF THE PLAINSBORN.
AS PATHETIC UNDER THIS SUN AS IT IS UNDER OUR OWN.
AND THE STEADY ARROGANCE OF THE KINGSAGENT.
I WOULD THINK BEING BEATEN AND TIED MIGHT PROVOKE A MODICUM OF HUMILITY, BUT TO ONE AS BASE AS YOU, I SUPPOSE ALL LESSONS IN LOSS ARE WASTED.
NEEIGGHHH!
OH, GO SWALLOW YOUR OATS.
I WASN'T GOING TO DO NOTHING.


And so with that unprecedented barrage, one that might have laid waste to any number of solar systems...
...Supergirl fell from the sky and toward the planet below.
The heat of reentry began to warm her and, as she described it to me, there was a feeling of comfort in it.
It reminded her of Krypton, of coming home after school and her father overheating the laser grill, raising the temperature in the whole apartment.
She could see him dashing through the kitchen to tell her everything was all right, he'd got it under control, just don't tell your mother when she gets home.
And Supergirl would smile knowing she'd got something from her father not many ever got, a secret.
And as she continued to fall and the flames hugged her even closer she saw her house burn, she saw her parents burn, she saw her world burn.
Until all she had left was that secret and no one to whom she could tell it.
And knowing that, that she was the only one in the whole universe who could tell the story of her father and the laser grill, she knew she could not die that day.
Her life was one of trillions.
But that memory was unique and needed preserving.

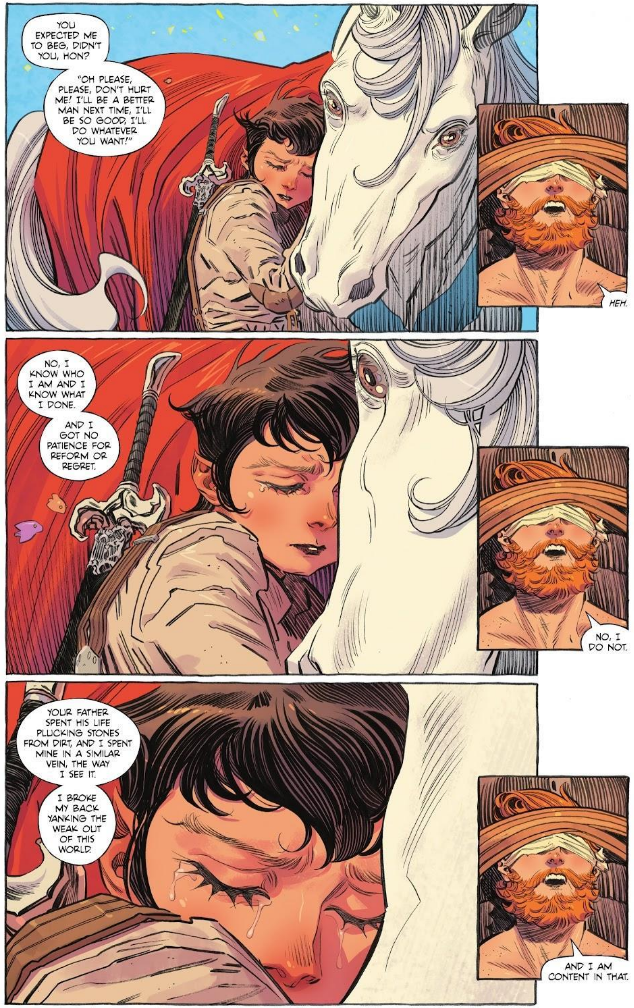

The *Bonnie Prince Charlie* had taken its shot and now had to reload, and its stocks of balls powerful enough to down Supergirl were quickly dwindling.
Which meant as she emerged from the atmosphere she found an empty sky waiting for her.
She cut through it with ease.
You will often hear it told that sound does not travel in space, and the caverns of the cosmos are filled only with silence.
This, however, is a common misinterpretation, for though you and I may not be able to hear it, those with better ears can pick up the subtle vibrations of the remnants of interstellar gases and dusts.
So as she plowed into that mighty ship, I imagine Supergirl enjoying the roar of its breach.
She pounded through four floors of the vessel to emerge on the upper deck.
The captain gave out a howl, "To arms! To arms!"
Dozens of the most vicious men and women in the universe grasped their favored weapons in their hands and eyed her long and hard, searching for vulnerability.
In the meantime, Supergirl got her feet steady and her fists clenched.


YOUR FATHER WASN'T ANYONE SPECIAL, YOU KNOW.
I'VE BEEN WANDERING THE PLAINS FOR THE KINGSCOUNCIL FOR YEARS.
IT'S FINE MONEY AND I ENJOY THE WORK.
GO AMONGST THE PEOPLE, TALK TO THEM, EARN THEIR TRUST, HEAR THEIR WHISPERS.
FIND THE LOYAL. PUNISH THE WICKED.
"I HAD A STANDARD WAY OF APPROACHING THE TOPIC. I'D TELL A JOKE ABOUT THE KING, SOMETHING A LITTLE BAWDY.
"HAVING TO DO WITH THE RUMORS THAT THE FIRSTPRINCE WAS SIRED BY THE KING'S SISTER AND NOT THE REVERENDMOTHER.
"THOSE WHO GO ALONG WITH THE HUMOR REVEAL THEMSELVES TO BE UNKNOWINGLY AWAITING EVENTUAL EXECUTION.
"YOUR FATHER ACTUALLY DIDN'T LAUGH, MUCH TO HIS CREDIT. INSTEAD, HE OBJECTED FORCEFULLY.
"HE SCREAMED AT ME FOR MY RUDENESS ON HIS LAND.
"HE DID NOT LIKE THE CONTENT OR CONTEXT AND ASKED ME TO IMMEDIATELY APOLOGIZE FOR THE BLASPHEMY AND WALK AWAY FROM THE HOME OF HIS FAMILY."


"AND I STOOD THERE LOOKING AT THIS SMALL MAN, THIS FARMER OF ROCKS.
"SCREAMING ON AT ME ABOUT HIS SERVICE TO THE KING AND MY BETRAYAL OF OUR SACRED NATION.
"HIM MAKING DEMANDS OF ME. KNOWING NOTHING OF MY LIFE! MY SACRIFICES FOR MY KING, MY DUTY SO OFTEN SERVED.
"I WASN'T ON THAT FIELD ANYMORE. INSTEAD I SAW HIM IN MY MIND'S EYE, YEARS AFTER THIS, BENDING DOWN DAY AFTER DAY, CLEARING FIELDS OF THEIR HARD SEEDS.
"AND ALL THE WHILE IMAGINING HIMSELF MY BETTER.
"BECAUSE HE DIDN'T LIKE A JOKE I'D TOLD.
"I WAS LOST IN THIS VISION, AND WHEN I FOUND MY WAY OUT, MY SWORD WAS IN HIS GUT.
SO HOW CAN YOU BE ANGRY WITH ME, GIRL?
I CAME TO YOUR HOMESTEAD TO FIND THE LOYAL AND THE WICKED.
AND I DO BELIEVE I SUCCEEDED.


I mocked Dikrwerisa earlier--and he is due for a mocking, so I regret it not one ounce--but it is difficult to capture *The Run of the Deck* in stale prose.
I concede the odds against her are better left to the poets.
Supergirl there encountered hundreds of battle-forged warriors, men from every corner of the universe who'd spent all their years enjoying the fight and kill of war.
The swords cutting at her had cut through innumerous civilizations.
The guns aimed at her had been put to the heads of legions of innocents.
Now understand, the Brigands did not slaughter their way through galaxies without fair resistance.
The best and brightest of a thousand worlds had taken up their gauntlet and dared them to the field of combat.
And there those brave challengers were defeated, and there they fell to their knees and begged for the safety of their loved ones, and there they were denied any such mercy.
We are the powerful, you are the powerless.
Your world is now our world.

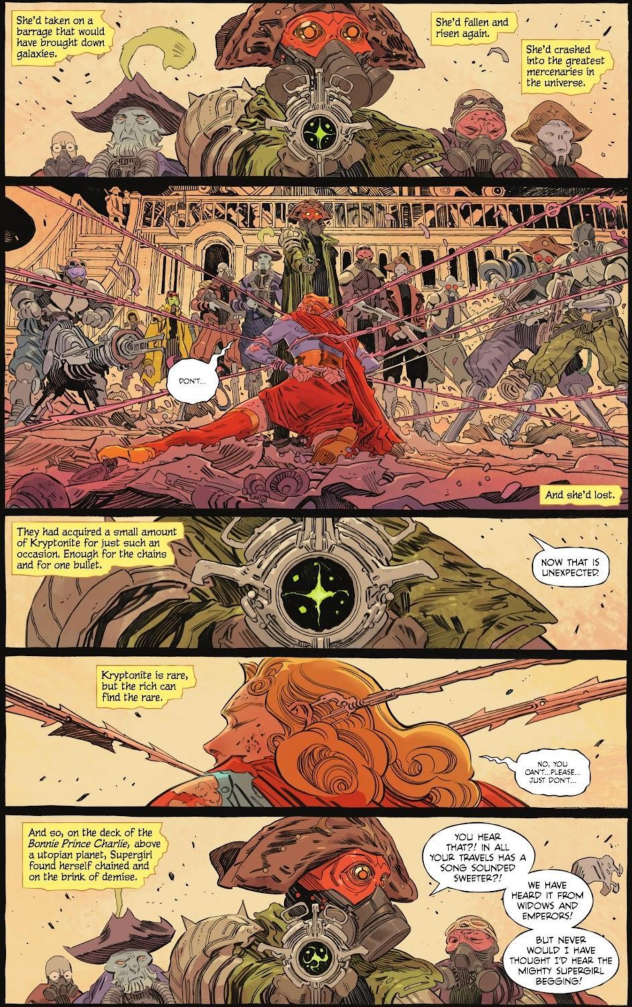

I told her once, that she, who lost everything to holocaust, must so hate these Brigands who bring genocide with a smile.
She considered this.
"I'm Supergirl.
"I don't hate anyone."
She smiled politely, and she moved on.
And I learned then that up can be down and right can be wrong, and a lie told well can be true and good.

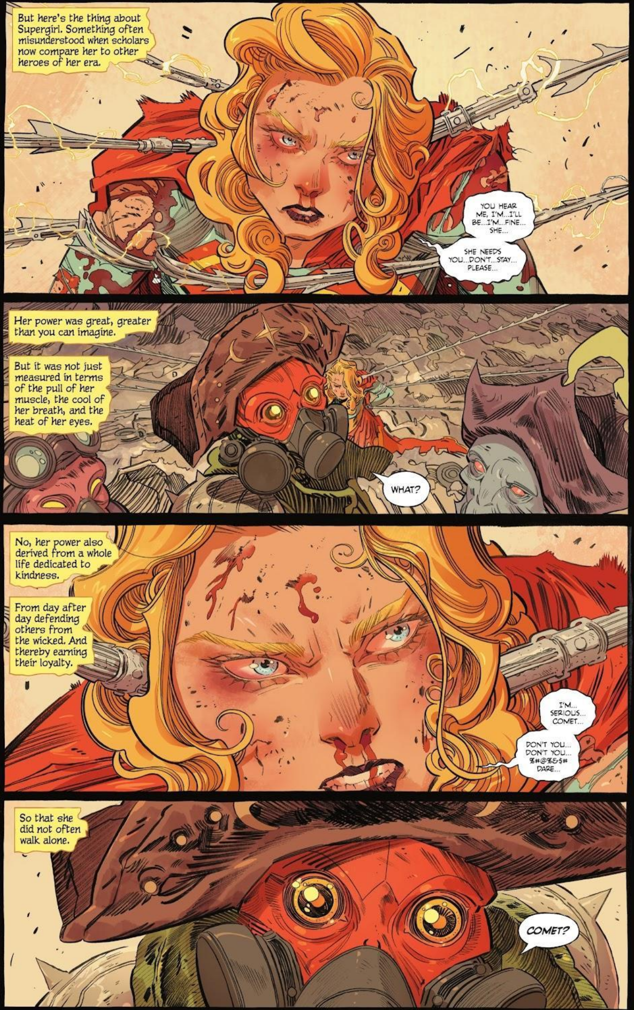


YOU EXPECTED ME TO BEG, DIDN'T YOU, HON?
"OH PLEASE, PLEASE, DON'T HURT ME! I'LL BE A BETTER MAN NEXT TIME, I'LL BE SO GOOD, I'LL DO WHATEVER YOU WANT!"
HEH.
NO, I KNOW WHO I AM AND I KNOW WHAT I DONE.
AND I GOT NO PATIENCE FOR REFORM OR REGRET.
NO, I DO NOT.
YOUR FATHER SPENT HIS LIFE PLUCKING STONES FROM DIRT, AND I SPENT MINE IN A SIMILAR VEIN, THE WAY I SEE IT.
I BROKE MY BACK YANKING THE WEAK OUT OF THIS WORLD.
AND I AM CONTENT IN THAT.

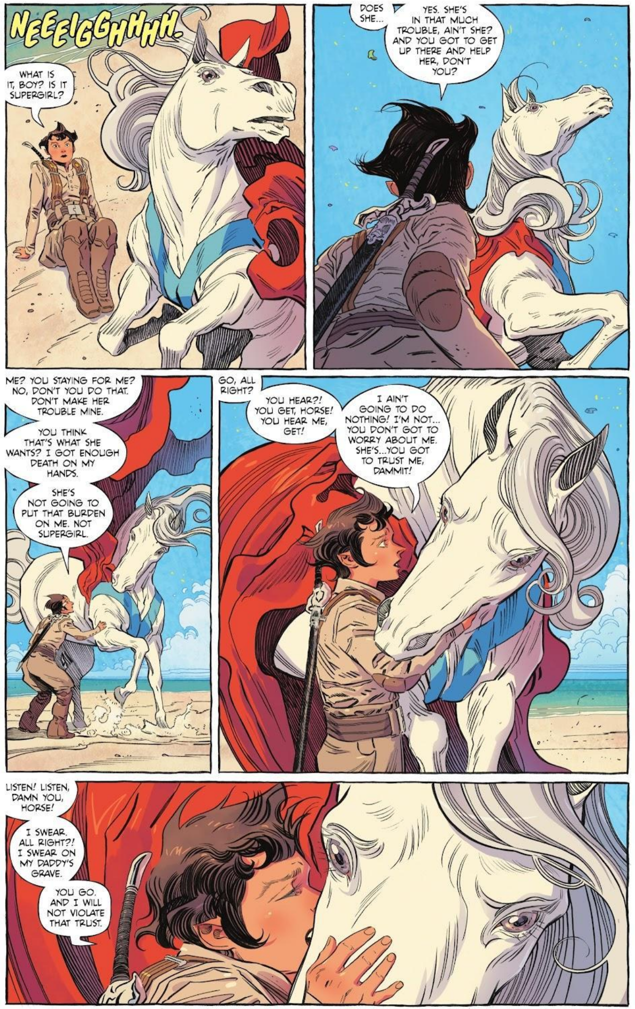


I DO NOTHING BUT MOURN MY FATHER.
DON'T FUSS YOURSELF ABOUT IT. YOU'RE BUT A GIRL.
WHAT DOES BEING A GIRL HAVE TO DO WITH THE PRICE OF CANE IN THE OUTSKIRTS?
GIRLS ARE NEEDY THINGS. YOU NEED LOVE AND DOLLS AND FATHERS.
IT MAKES YOU *DELICATE.* IT'S NOT YOUR FAULT. JUST WHO YOU ARE.
YOU'RE TIED TO A TREE.
SEEMS TO ME LIKE YOU NEED A FEW THINGS MORE THAN I DO.
ABOVE ME IS THE MOST RUTHLESS AND POWERFUL COMPANY OF OUTLAWS IN THE UNIVERSE, AND THEY ARE DEDICATED TO SECURING MY FREEDOM.
AND SHOULD ODDS DEFY THEM AND THEY FALTER IN THEIR MISSION, I WILL BE LEFT TO THE GENTLE CARE OF THE KIND AND EVER-FORGIVING SUPERGIRL OF EARTH.
SO YOU SEE, CHILD, I DON'T NEED NOTHING BUT TIME.
NHMMMM.


She'd taken on a barrage that would have brought down galaxies.
She'd fallen and risen again.
She'd crashed into the greatest mercenaries in the universe.
DON'T...
And she'd lost.
They had acquired a small amount of Kryptonite for just such an occasion. Enough for the chains and for one bullet.
NOW THAT IS UNEXPECTED.
Kryptonite is rare, but the rich can find the rare.
NO, YOU CAN'T...PLEASE... JUST DON'T...
And so, on the deck of the *Bonnie Prince Charlie*, above a utopian planet, Supergirl found herself chained and on the brink of demise.
YOU HEAR THAT?! IN ALL YOUR TRAVELS HAS A SONG SOUNDED SWEETER?!
WE HAVE HEARD IT FROM WIDOWS AND EMPERORS!
BUT NEVER WOULD I HAVE THOUGHT I'D HEAR THE MIGHTY SUPERGIRL BEGGING!


But here's the thing about Supergirl. Something often misunderstood when scholars now compare her to other heroes of her era.
YOU HEAR ME, I'M...I'LL BE...I'M...FINE... SHE...
SHE NEEDS YOU...DON'T...STAY... PLEASE...
Her power was great, greater than you can imagine.
But it was not just measured in terms of the pull of her muscle, the cool of her breath, and the heat of her eyes.
WHAT?
No, her power also derived from a whole life dedicated to kindness.
From day after day defending others from the wicked. And thereby earning their loyalty.
I'M... SERIOUS... COMET...
DON'T YOU... DON'T YOU... %#@%&$# DARE...
So that she did not often walk alone.
COMET?


COMET?
NEEEIGGHHH!
WHAT... WHAT IS IT?
HM. THAT DOES NOT SOUND LIKE A WELL ANIMAL. DID HE BREAK A LEG?
DO YOU REQUIRE ASSISTANCE IN PUTTING HIM DOWN? FOR I SHALL BE FIRST TO VOLUNTEER.
HAVE YOU EVER KNOWN WHEN TO SEAL YOUR LIPS?!
WELL, YOU'RE THE LITTLE #%%@ WHO TOOK MY GAG OFF.
WHO REALLY IS TO BLAME?
NEEIGGGHH!

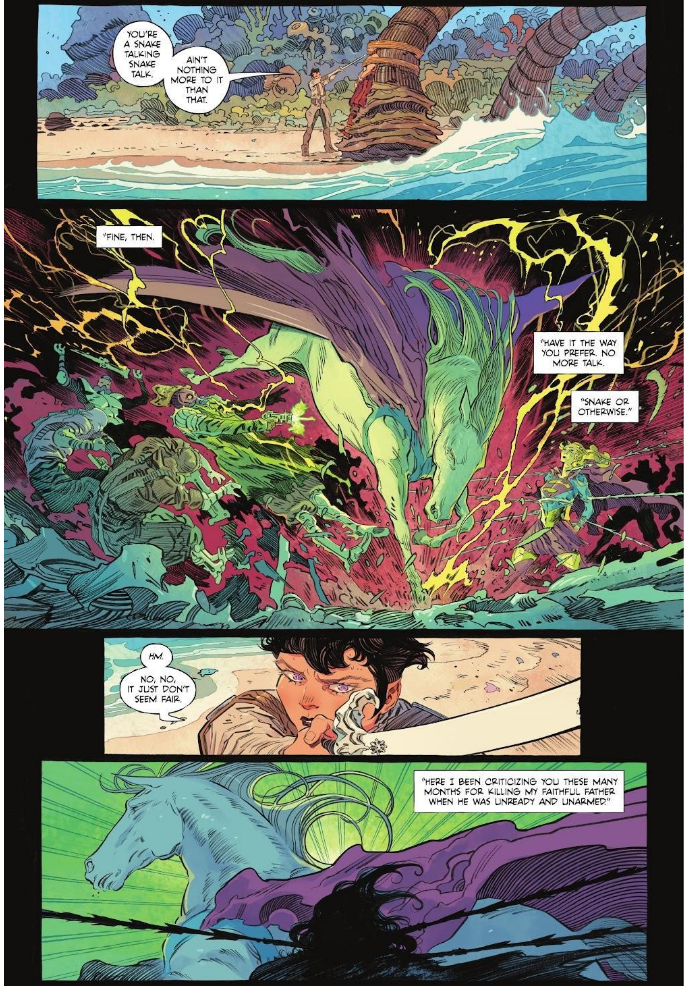

NEEEIGGHHHH!
WHAT IS IT, BOY? IS IT SUPERGIRL?
DOES SHE...
YES. SHE'S IN THAT MUCH TROUBLE, AIN'T SHE? AND YOU GOT TO GET UP THERE AND HELP HER, DON'T YOU?
ME? YOU STAYING FOR ME? NO, DON'T YOU DO THAT. DON'T MAKE HER TROUBLE MINE.
YOU THINK THAT'S WHAT SHE WANTS? I GOT ENOUGH DEATH ON MY HANDS.
SHE'S NOT GOING TO PUT THAT BURDEN ON ME. NOT SUPERGIRL.
GO, ALL RIGHT?
YOU HEAR?! YOU GET, HORSE! YOU HEAR ME, GET!
I AIN'T GOING TO DO NOTHING! I'M NOT... YOU DON'T GOT TO WORRY ABOUT ME. SHE'S...YOU GOT TO TRUST ME, DAMMIT!
LISTEN! LISTEN, DAMN YOU, HORSE!
I SWEAR. ALL RIGHT?! I SWEAR ON MY DADDY'S GRAVE.
YOU GO. AND I WILL NOT VIOLATE THAT TRUST.

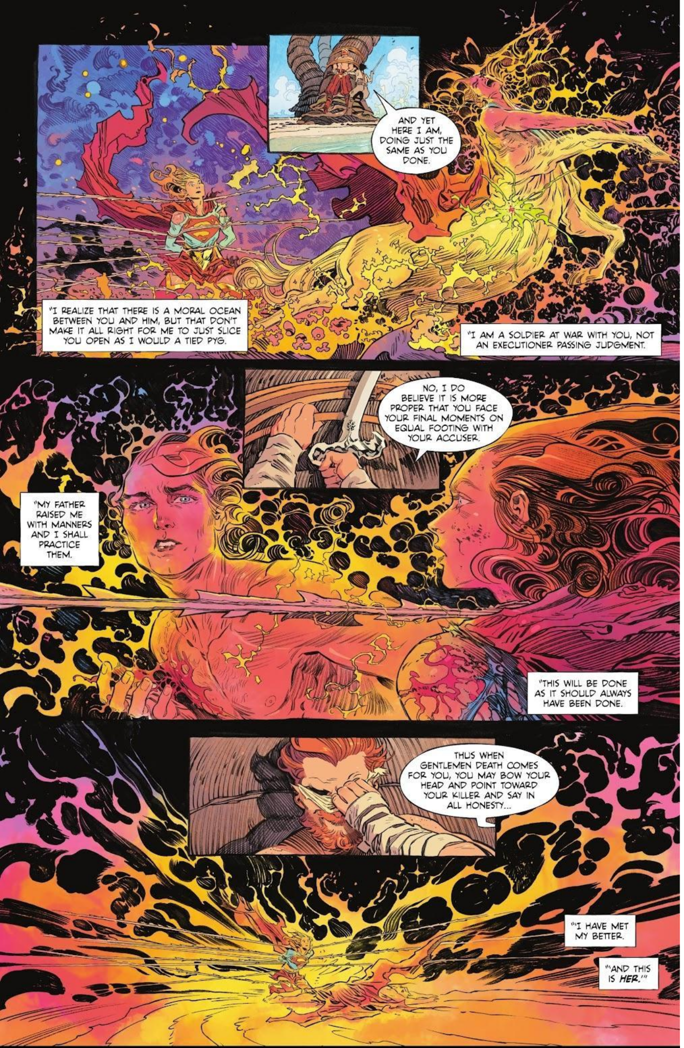

I said enough to convince him. And he backed away.
DC Comics Presents:
Supergirl: Woman of Tomorrow
Chapter Seven: "Hope, Help, and Compassion."
And took to the sky.
Tom King -- Writer
Bilquis Evely -- Artist
Matheus Lopes -- Colorist
Clayton Cowles -- Letterer
Evely & Lopes -- Cover
Nicola Scott & Annette Kwok -- Variant Cover
Jillian Grant -- Asst. Editor
Brittany Holzherr -- Editor
Mike Cotton -- Senior Editor
Leaving me with Krem of the Yellow Hills, the dastardly kingsagent who had killed my honored father on his own land.
I had traveled the stars searching for this dullard and now there was nothing left between us besides the word I'd given to a horse.
Supergirl based on the characters created by Jerry Siegel & Joe Shuster. By special arrangement with the Jerry Siegel Family.
Now, you ever lied to a horse before?
If you ain't had that experience, I do have some obligation to warn you, it can guilt you something awful.
But you get over it soon enough.
To Be Concluded!

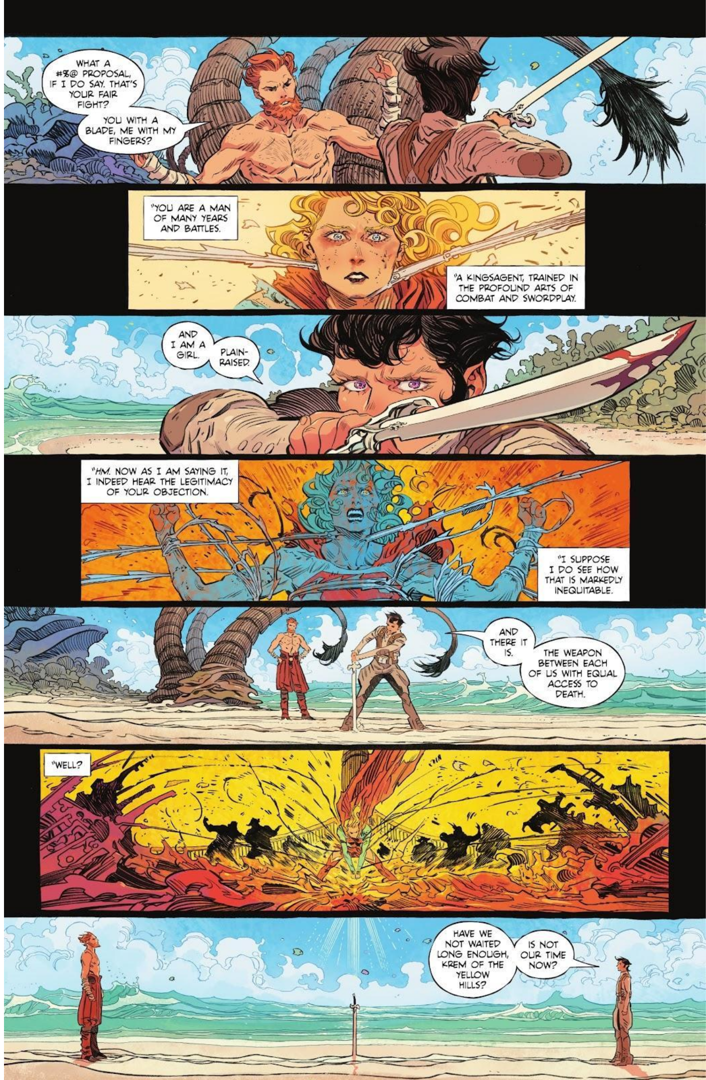

DC
8 of 8
SUPERGIRL
WOMAN OF TOMORROW
KING
EVELY
LOPES
AGES 13+
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MURDER ON THEMYSCIRA LEADS TO ALL-OUT WAR!
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Art by JOËLLE JONES, ELENA CASAGRANDE, LAURA BRAGA, SKYLAR PATRIDGE, ALITHA MARTINEZ, ROSI KÄMPE, and PAULINA GANUCHEAU
THE FIRST WONDER WOMAN CROSSOVER IN DECADES!
A game-changing seven-part event starting in March
Trial of the Amazons #1 variant cover by Jen Bartel


DO IT.
HELL, ENJOY IT.
DC Comics Presents:
"YOU WON'T HAVE MUCH JOY AFTER, SO YOU MIGHT AS WELL.
Supergirl: Woman of Tomorrow
"WHEN THE BRIGANDS COME TO AVENGE ME, YOU CAN CLING TO THIS MOMENT.
Chapter Eight: "Ruthye, Supergirl, and Krem of the Yellow Hills"
OH, I KNOW YOU'LL RUN. AND THEY'LL LOOK FOR YOU, LIKE YOU LOOKED FOR ME.
AND THEY'RE NOT AS GOOD AS YOU. COULD BE THEY WON'T FIND YOU.
Tom King -- Writer
Bilquis Evely -- Artist
Matheus Lopes -- Colorist
"THOUGH THEY KNOW WHERE I'M FROM. PROBABLY THE FIRST PLACE THEY'LL LOOK.
"AND THEY'LL GET TO YOUR FAMILY ON THAT $@% ROCK FARM.
"ASK THEM SOME FIRM QUESTIONS IN AN IMPOLITE MANNER.
SUPERGIRL CAN'T PROTECT EVERYONE FOREVER.
BLOOD'S GOING TO COME.
Clayton Cowles -- Letterer
Evely & Lopes -- Cover
Janaina Medeiros -- Variant Cover
Jillian Grant -- Asst. Editor
Brittany Holzherr -- Editor
Paul Kaminski -- Senior Editor
Supergirl based on the characters created by Jerry Siegel & Joe Shuster.
By special arrangement with the Jerry Siegel Family.


YOU'RE A SNAKE TALKING SNAKE TALK.
AIN'T NOTHING MORE TO IT THAN THAT.
"FINE, THEN.
"HAVE IT THE WAY YOU PREFER. NO MORE TALK.
"SNAKE OR OTHERWISE."
HM.
NO, NO, IT JUST DON'T SEEM FAIR.
"HERE I BEEN CRITICIZING YOU THESE MANY MONTHS FOR KILLING MY FAITHFUL FATHER WHEN HE WAS UNREADY AND UNARMED."


AND YET HERE I AM, DOING JUST THE SAME AS YOU DONE.
"I REALIZE THAT THERE IS A MORAL OCEAN BETWEEN YOU AND HIM, BUT THAT DON'T MAKE IT ALL RIGHT FOR ME TO JUST SLICE YOU OPEN AS I WOULD A TIED PYG.
"I AM A SOLDIER AT WAR WITH YOU, NOT AN EXECUTIONER PASSING JUDGMENT.
NO, I DO BELIEVE IT IS MORE PROPER THAT YOU FACE YOUR FINAL MOMENTS ON EQUAL FOOTING WITH YOUR ACCUSER.
"MY FATHER RAISED ME WITH MANNERS AND I SHALL PRACTICE THEM.
"THIS WILL BE DONE AS IT SHOULD ALWAYS HAVE BEEN DONE.
THUS WHEN GENTLEMEN DEATH COMES FOR YOU, YOU MAY BOW YOUR HEAD AND POINT TOWARD YOUR KILLER AND SAY IN ALL HONESTY...
"I HAVE MET MY BETTER.
"AND THIS IS *HER*."


WHAT A #%@ PROPOSAL, IF I DO SAY. THAT'S YOUR FAIR FIGHT?
YOU WITH A BLADE, ME WITH MY FINGERS?
"YOU ARE A MAN OF MANY YEARS AND BATTLES.
"A KINGSAGENT, TRAINED IN THE PROFOUND ARTS OF COMBAT AND SWORDPLAY.
AND I AM A GIRL.
PLAIN-RAISED.
"*HM.* NOW AS I AM SAYING IT, I INDEED HEAR THE LEGITIMACY OF YOUR OBJECTION.
"I SUPPOSE I DO SEE HOW THAT IS MARKEDLY INEQUITABLE.
AND THERE IT IS.
THE WEAPON BETWEEN EACH OF US WITH EQUAL ACCESS TO DEATH.
"WELL?
HAVE WE NOT WAITED LONG ENOUGH, KREM OF THE YELLOW HILLS?
IS NOT OUR TIME NOW?


I had traveled the stars in the company of the universe's paramount warrior.
Throughout that time, I had kept my eyes open and learned much.
For instance, an opponent robbed of their feet is worth the loss of a weapon.
All the more so if you can then deprive them of their sight.
KRAKKK
GAAAAH!
Also, once a weakness has been exploited, do not hesitate to keep exploiting it, until your opponent has come up with a proper defense.
However long that might take.
KRAKK


That said, he still had his advantages.
By which I mean he was large and I was small.
KRASHH
YOU... STUPID %#@%#.
But size and power do not dictate the outcomes of conflict.
Battles are not won by measuring sticks and scales.
THNNK
No, at some point flesh must meet flesh.
And only then can we determine what matters and what does not.



For instance.
Doesn't matter his current girth--you kick a man enough in the face, he starts to lose a sense of the up and the down of things.
Only reality he really understands is he don't want to be kicked in the face no more.
I am not a cruel person by instinct, though I will get there if you let me.
On this occasion, I had some measure of pity and stopped with the booting.
So instead, I took his forearm in my teeth and began to clamp down.
At first there was some resistance from his skin and bone.
But eventually I got through enough to get the effect I so hungrily sought out.
AAAAAAA!
CHMMP
And the sword was mine once again.



Finally, all was set.
I'd practiced this speech for the last months, and the words came easy.
WHEN I WAS BUT LITTLE, MY FATHER TOOK ME ON HIS KNEE.
HE EXPLAINED THAT THE WORLD WAS ROUGH AND MERCILESS.
NNNN.
EVERY FALL HE ROSE AND SOWED THE FIELDS WITH PEBBLES. EVERY SPRING HE ROSE AND REAPED THE STONES.
IT WAS BACK-ACHING WORK AND IT JUST WAS ENOUGH TO SURVIVE.
AND THE YEARS FELL AWAY IN A BLUR OF MISERY AND MONOTONY.
YOU %#%&@!
AT THE SHUT OF THE DAY, HIS SOUL WEARY, HE WOULD WONDER WHAT MADE HIM GO ON.
WAS NOT THE TRANQUIL REST OF DEATH PREFERABLE TO THE CRUSHING CHORE OF LIFE?
AAAAAA!
SLLLTT
HE FANTASIZED OF THE BOULDERS ON THE HILL ABOVE OUR HOUSE GROWING SO LARGE THAT THEY'D OVERCOME THE DIRT BENEATH THEM AND RUMBLE DOWN UPON HIS BODY.
IT WOULD BE QUICK AND IT WOULD BE DONE.
GAAAAA!
HE TOLD ME THIS WITH NO HUMOR.
I DO NOT BELIEVE I'D YET GROWN ALL THE TEETH IN MY MOUTH.



THEN HE EXPLAINED TO ME IN BLUNT WORDS THAT DESPITE THE PLENTIFUL HARDSHIPS, LIFE WAS INDEED WORTH THE EFFORT.
YOUR FATHER...
HE SAID, AT SUNSEND, IN HIS OWN BEDCHAMBER, AS HE LAID HIMSELF DOWN AND WRAPPED HIS ARMS AROUND HIS DEAR WIFE...
...HE CLOSED HIS EYES.
AND BEFORE THE DREAMS TUGGED HIM AWAY, HE SAW AN IMAGE.
HE WAS JUST...
HE SAW ME, HE SAID.
ME.
FIRST BEING BORN. THEN BEING HELD. THEN GROWING TALL AND STRONG.
YOUR FATHER WAS JUST ANOTHER MAN ON A FARM...
AND FOR HIM THAT WAS ENOUGH.
HELL, HE SAID, THAT WAS PLENTY.
NOTHING... SPECIAL ABOUT HIM AT ALL...

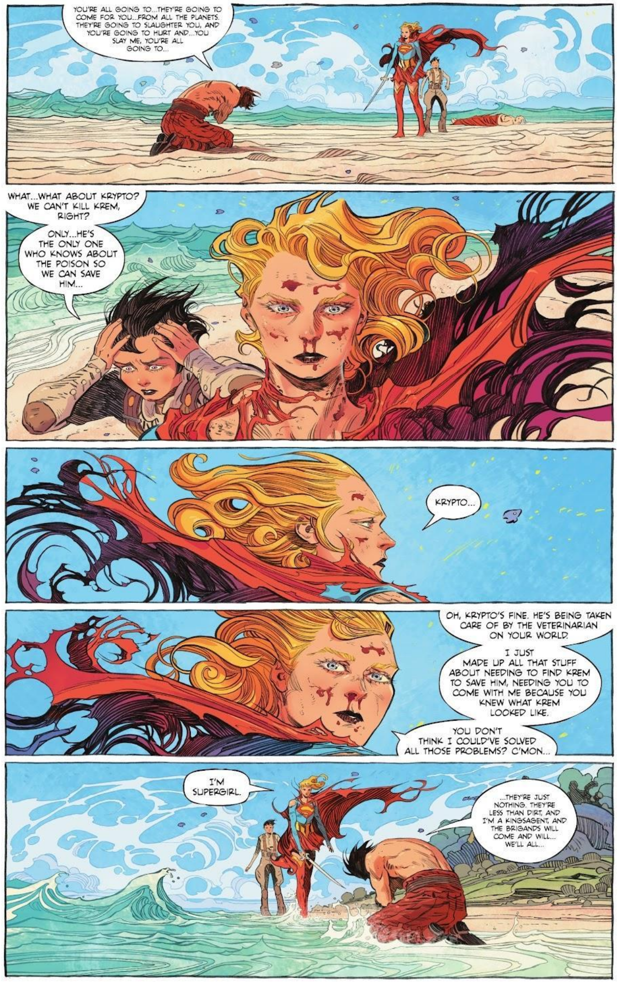


Then I was done talking and the moment had come.
I had crossed these hundred thousand galaxies with nothing in my heart but hate, bile, and resolve.
The blade was in my hand and I guided it down to it's natural conclusion.
AAAAAAAA!
But I did not complete the cut.
NNNN.

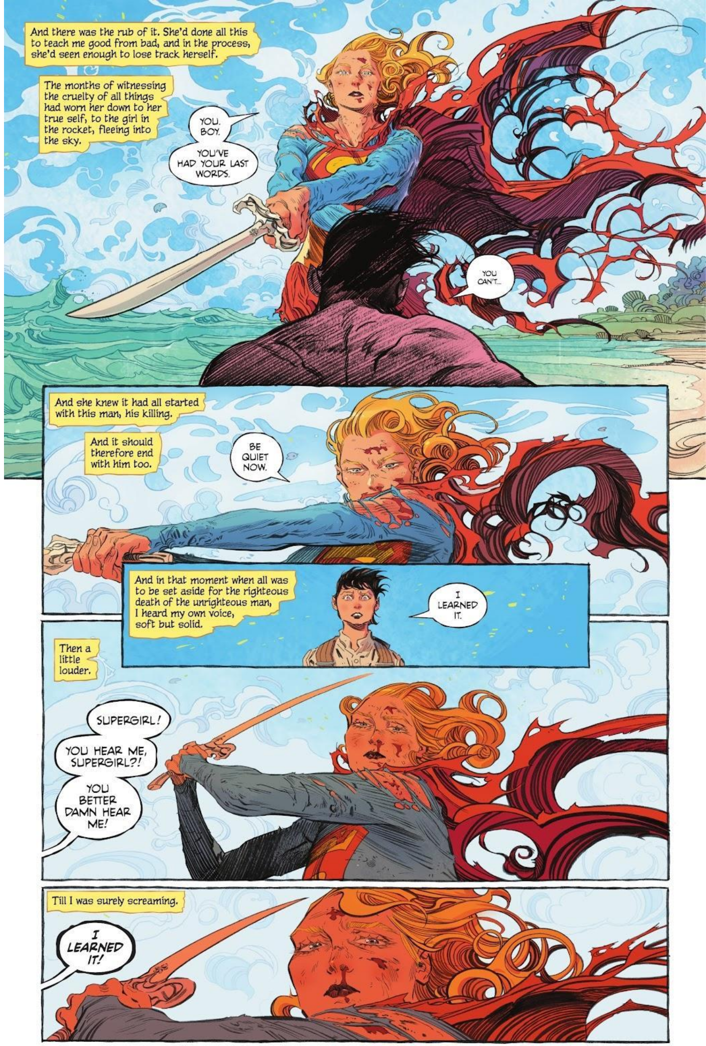

WHAT?
I tried again.
FOR MY FATHER!
AAAAAA!
And again.
MY FATHER... KREM OF THE YELLOW HILLS, KILLER OF MY DARLING...
And again.
...FATHER!
And again and again and again and again and again and again and...
MY FATHER!
SOMETHING'S...
WHAT'S WRONG WITH ME?!
WHY CAN'T I KILL YOU?!

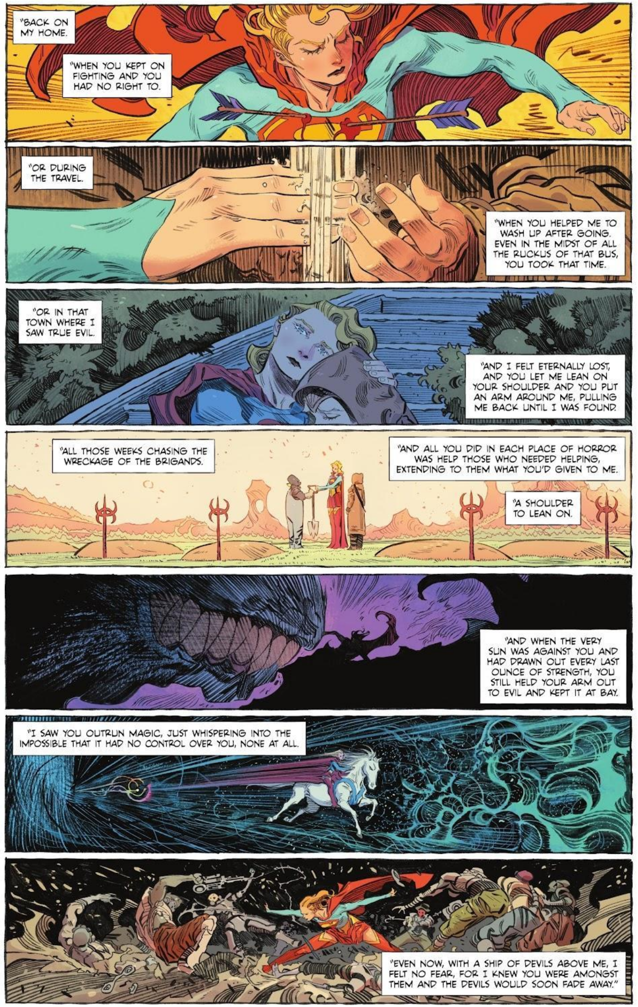

I DON'T KNOW.
MAYBE YOU JUST NEED A LITTLE HELP.


WHO...
THAT'S...THAT WAS COMET. HE WAS A MAN...HE WAS CURSED...TO BE IN THE BODY OF A HORSE...IT'S COMPLICATED.
HE DIDN'T LIKE TO TELL PEOPLE ABOUT IT. HE TOLD ME BECAUSE HE LOVED...
IT DOESN'T MATTER. IT'S COMPLICATED. BUT I KNEW.
BUT HE SAVED... IT'S GOING TO BE OKAY.
THE BRIGANDS ARE IN RETREAT NOW. THEY TOOK A GOOD BEATING AND THEY RAN.
I...I'LL FOLLOW THEM LATER.
NOW I HAVE TO...
WE'RE AT THE END.
AREN'T WE?


YOU'RE ALL GOING TO...THEY'RE GOING TO COME FOR YOU...FROM ALL THE PLANETS. THEY'RE GOING TO SLAUGHTER YOU, AND YOU'RE GOING TO HURT AND...YOU SLAY ME, YOU'RE ALL GOING TO...
WHAT...WHAT ABOUT KRYPTO? WE CAN'T KILL KREM, RIGHT?
ONLY...HE'S THE ONLY ONE WHO KNOWS ABOUT THE POISON SO WE CAN SAVE HIM...
KRYPTO...
OH, KRYPTO'S FINE. HE'S BEING TAKEN CARE OF BY THE VETERINARIAN ON YOUR WORLD.
I JUST MADE UP ALL THAT STUFF ABOUT NEEDING TO FIND KREM TO SAVE HIM, NEEDING YOU TO COME WITH ME BECAUSE YOU KNEW WHAT KREM LOOKED LIKE.
YOU DON'T THINK I COULD'VE SOLVED ALL THOSE PROBLEMS? C'MON...
I'M SUPERGIRL.
...THEY'RE JUST NOTHING. THEY'RE LESS THAN DIRT, AND I'M A KINGSAGENT, AND THE BRIGANDS WILL COME AND WILL... WE'LL ALL...


I...I DON'T UNDERSTAND.
BECAUSE YOU WOULDN'T LISTEN TO ME.
I COULD TELL YOU WERE STUBBORN. I KNOW STUBBORN WELL ENOUGH.
WHO ARE YOU, GOING AFTER ME...YOU DON'T KNOW... YOU'RE JUST...WHO ARE YOU TO TRY TO BE AFTER WHEN YOU'RE...
YOU WEREN'T GOING TO LEARN THAT KILLING IS WRONG JUST BY ME SAYING IT.
YOU WERE GOING TO WASTE THE REST OF YOUR LIFE CHASING THIS %#@%#, DREAMING ABOUT THIS WORTHLESS %#@%.
LIKE I WOULD DREAM ABOUT KRYPTON.
I HAD TO *SHOW* YOU.
I TOOK YOU WITH ME, HOPING YOU'D LEARN ABOUT... I DON'T KNOW...
...SOMETHING. BUT...
BUT YOU DIDN'T LEARN, DID YOU?
WHICH MAKES ALL THE SENSE IN THE WORLD, BECAUSE I COULDN'T TEACH YOU.
BECAUSE...
...I STILL DREAM OF KRYPTON.
YOU'RE... NOTHING. WEAK AND...AND WORTHLESS...

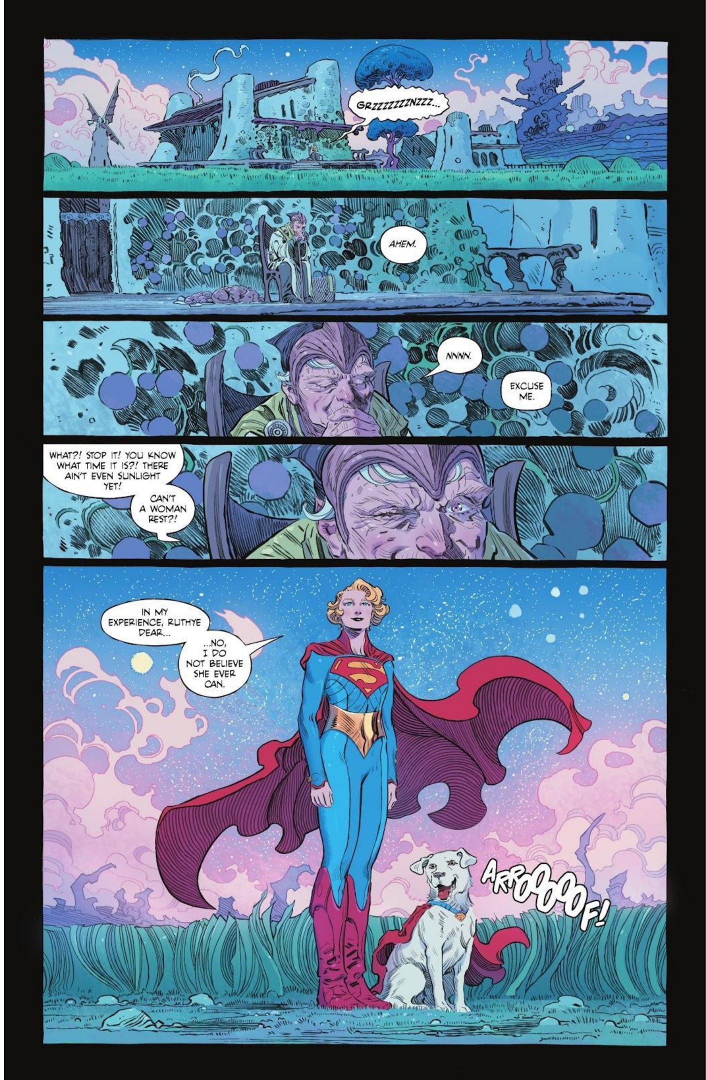

And there was the rub of it. She'd done all this to teach me good from bad, and in the process, she'd seen enough to lose track herself.
The months of witnessing the cruelty of all things had worn her down to her true self, to the girl in the rocket, fleeing into the sky.
YOU. BOY.
YOU'VE HAD YOUR LAST WORDS.
YOU CAN'T...
And she knew it had all started with this man, his killing.
And it should therefore end with him too.
BE QUIET NOW.
And in that moment when all was to be set aside for the righteous death of the unrighteous man, I heard my own voice, soft but solid.
I LEARNED IT.
Then a little louder.
SUPERGIRL!
YOU HEAR ME, SUPERGIRL?!
YOU BETTER DAMN HEAR ME!
Till I was surely screaming.
I LEARNED IT!


"BACK ON MY HOME.
"WHEN YOU KEPT ON FIGHTING AND YOU HAD NO RIGHT TO.
"OR DURING THE TRAVEL.
"WHEN YOU HELPED ME TO WASH UP AFTER GOING. EVEN IN THE MIDST OF ALL THE RUCKUS OF THAT BUS, YOU TOOK THAT TIME.
"OR IN THAT TOWN WHERE I SAW TRUE EVIL.
"AND I FELT ETERNALLY LOST, AND YOU LET ME LEAN ON YOUR SHOULDER AND YOU PUT AN ARM AROUND ME, PULLING ME BACK UNTIL I WAS FOUND.
"ALL THOSE WEEKS CHASING THE WRECKAGE OF THE BRIGANDS.
"AND ALL YOU DID IN EACH PLACE OF HORROR WAS HELP THOSE WHO NEEDED HELPING, EXTENDING TO THEM WHAT YOU'D GIVEN TO ME.
"A SHOULDER TO LEAN ON.
"AND WHEN THE VERY SUN WAS AGAINST YOU AND HAD DRAWN OUT EVERY LAST OUNCE OF STRENGTH, YOU STILL HELD YOUR ARM OUT TO EVIL AND KEPT IT AT BAY.
"I SAW YOU OUTRUN MAGIC, JUST WHISPERING INTO THE IMPOSSIBLE THAT IT HAD NO CONTROL OVER YOU, NONE AT ALL.
"EVEN NOW, WITH A SHIP OF DEVILS ABOVE ME, I FELT NO FEAR, FOR I KNEW YOU WERE AMONGST THEM AND THE DEVILS WOULD SOON FADE AWAY."


"TRUTH OF IT IS, WHEN MY BLESSED FATHER PASSED, I FELT THE GOOD FORTUNE AFFORDED TO THE UNIVERSE WAS NOW SPENT.
"IF SOMEONE OF HIS KINDNESS AND GENEROSITY COULD BE PUT DOWN WITH SUCH SENSELESS INDIFFERENCE, THEN ALL WAS CHAOS.
"AND IN THAT MAELSTROM OF THE ABSURD, I COULD BE NOTHING BUT ANOTHER DOT OF DUST FLUNG THIS WAY AND THAT.
"AND SO, I DEDICATED MYSELF TO THE DEATH OF KREM OF THE YELLOW HILLS.
"BECAUSE IF I MUST KNOW THAT NOTHING MATTERS, I SAW NO REASON WHY THAT KILLER SHOULD REMAIN IGNORANT OF THAT ESSENTIAL TRUTH.
BUT WATCHING YOU, BEING BY YOUR SIDE THESE MANY DAYS, I CAN'T HELP BUT THINK THAT GRACE DID NOT DIE WITH MY FATHER.
THAT THERE IS A MIGHTY WHEEL STILL CHURNING IN THE UNIVERSE MOVING US ALL FORWARD, AND IT IS EACH OF OUR RESPONSIBILITY TO PAY RESPECT TO THAT FATE.
WORLDS WILL LIVE AND WORLDS WILL DIE AND EVIL WILL CARVE ITS NAME INTO THE INNOCENT AND GOOD PEOPLE WILL DO GOOD ACTS AND SUFFER ALL THE SAME.
AND EVERYWHERE GIRLS WILL BE BORN WITH THEIR EYES OPEN TO THE HATE AHEAD OF THEM, AND THEY WILL WONDER IF THEIR VOICE WILL BE HEARD ABOVE THE SCREAMS.
AND IN THAT MOMENT OF DOUBT THEY WILL LEARN, AS I HAVE LEARNED, OF THE LEGEND OF SUPERGIRL, WHO LOST EVERYTHING AND KEPT ON WALKING.
THEN THEY WILL SETTLE THEMSELVES, CONTENT IN THEIR POWER, KNOWING SOMEONE OUT THERE HAS SURVIVED THE STORM.
THAT TOMORROW, WHEN MALICE WILL MAKE ITS ATTEMPT AND HELP IS BEGGED FROM THE HEAVENS, THERE IS A WOMAN WAITING.

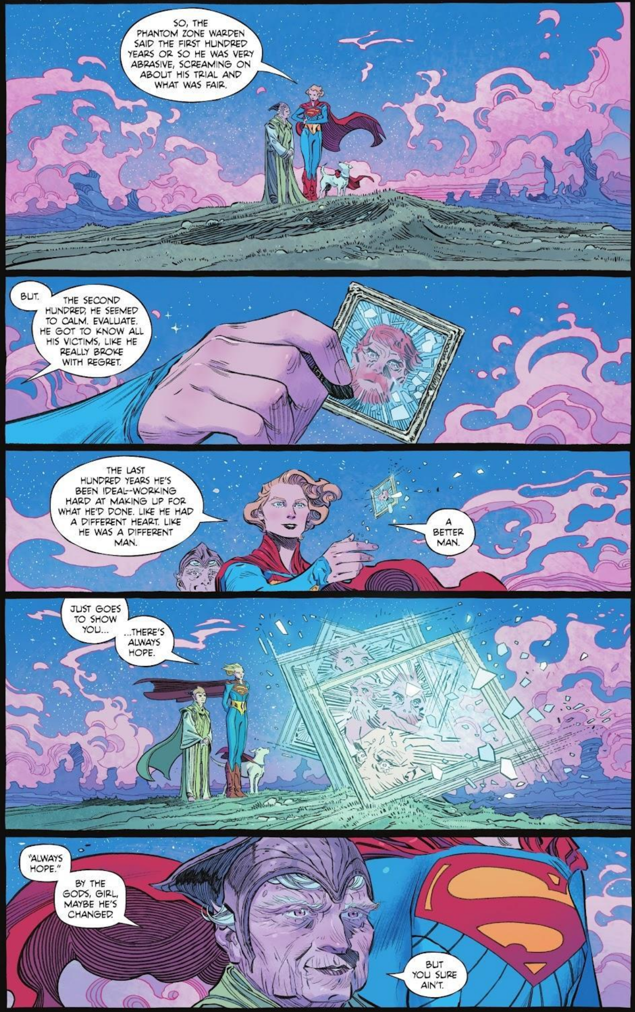


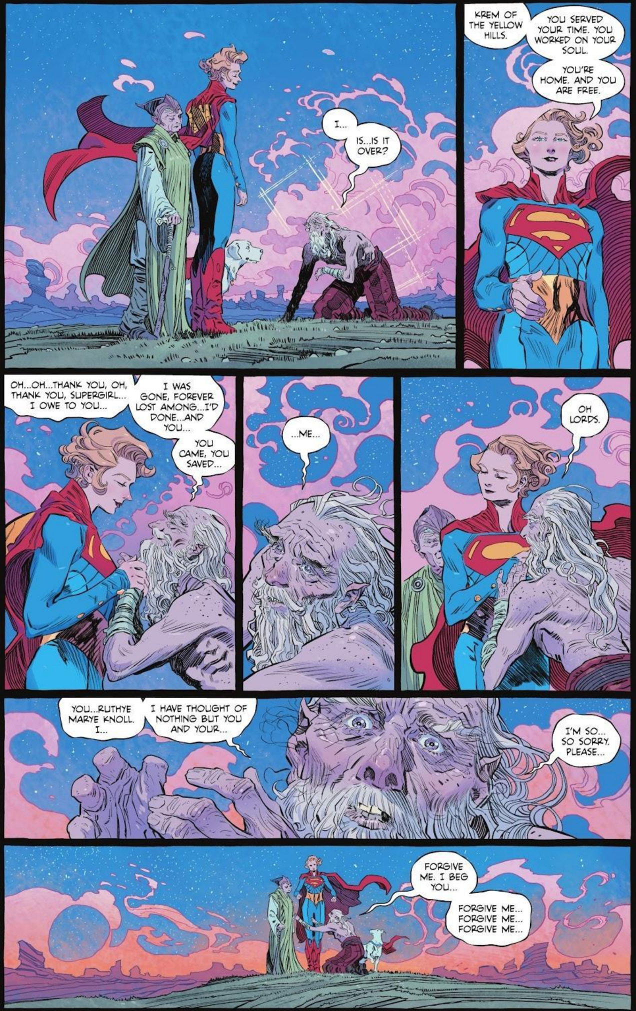
I TOO HAD THE SWORD ABOVE HIM.
BUT I COULD NOT BRING MYSELF TO HIS WRETCHEDNESS.
FOR, AS YOU KNOW AS WELL AS I...
...WHATEVER DREAMS WE MAY HAVE...
...ENOUGH KILLING'S BEEN DONE.
COME NOW. THE HOURS MOVE QUICKLY.
LET US AWAY TO FIND PUNISHMENT FOR THIS MAN, A GRAVE FOR YOUR HORSE, AND COMPANY WITH YOUR PUP.
RUTHYE...
IT'S...
IT'S TOO BIG.
WE'RE TOO SMALL.



GRZZZZZZNZZZ...
AHEM.
NNNN.
EXCUSE ME.
WHAT?! STOP IT! YOU KNOW WHAT TIME IT IS?! THERE AIN'T EVEN SUNLIGHT YET!
CAN'T A WOMAN REST?!
IN MY EXPERIENCE, RUTHYE DEAR...
...NO, I DO NOT BELIEVE SHE EVER CAN.
ARROOOOOF!


WHERE DO YOU WANT TO DO IT?
THERE'S A FIELD NOT FAR FROM HERE.
THAT'D BE THE PROPER PLACE, I'D THINK.
WHERE IT STARTED?
WHO'S A GOOD DOG, WHO'S A GOOD DOG?
KRYPTO'S A GOOD DOG.
FFFT. YOU KNOW AS WELL AS I DO.
THERE AIN'T NO START OR STOP TO THINGS.
THERE'S JUST ROOM THERE IS ALL.
OKAY.
I LIKED YOUR BOOK.
THAT FICTITIOUS FIDDLE-FADDLE. I'M SORRY YOU HAD TO WASTE YOUR TIME ON IT. DON'T KNOW WHY I WROTE THE TOME IN THE FIRST PLACE.
I SHOULD'VE TOLD WHAT REALLY HAPPENED IF I HAD ANY GUTS AT ALL. YOU THINK I'M SCARED OF A BRIGAND AT MY AGE?
LET THEM COME NOW, AND I'LL SHOW THEM A WHIPPING WORTHY OF THEIR CURSED WAYS.
YOU MADE SURE HE'D STAY LOCKED UP. YOU LET ME TAKE THE BURDEN OF THEIR VENGEANCE. YOU MADE A PROMISE. YOU KEPT IT.
AND I APPRECIATE IT.
WHAT USE IS THAT TO ME?
YOU APPRECIATE EVERYTHING.


SO, THE PHANTOM ZONE WARDEN SAID THE FIRST HUNDRED YEARS OR SO HE WAS VERY ABRASIVE, SCREAMING ON ABOUT HIS TRIAL AND WHAT WAS FAIR.
BUT.
THE SECOND HUNDRED, HE SEEMED TO CALM. EVALUATE. HE GOT TO KNOW ALL HIS VICTIMS, LIKE HE REALLY BROKE WITH REGRET.
THE LAST HUNDRED YEARS HE'S BEEN IDEAL--WORKING HARD AT MAKING UP FOR WHAT HE'D DONE. LIKE HE HAD A DIFFERENT HEART. LIKE HE WAS A DIFFERENT MAN.
A BETTER MAN.
JUST GOES TO SHOW YOU...
...THERE'S ALWAYS HOPE.
"ALWAYS HOPE."
BY THE GODS, GIRL, MAYBE HE'S CHANGED.
BUT YOU SURE AIN'T.


I...
IS...IS IT OVER?
KREM OF THE YELLOW HILLS.
YOU SERVED YOUR TIME. YOU WORKED ON YOUR SOUL.
YOU'RE HOME. AND YOU ARE FREE.
OH...OH...THANK YOU, OH, THANK YOU, SUPERGIRL... I OWE TO YOU...
I WAS GONE, FOREVER LOST AMONG...I'D DONE...AND YOU...
YOU CAME, YOU SAVED...
...ME...
OH LORDS.
YOU...RUTHYE MARYE KNOLL. I...
I HAVE THOUGHT OF NOTHING BUT YOU AND YOUR...
I'M SO... SO SORRY. PLEASE...
FORGIVE ME. I BEG YOU...
FORGIVE ME... FORGIVE ME... FORGIVE ME...


"It's too big," she said.
"We're too small."
I knew they were my words said long ago at the edge of Maypole, but I could not fathom their meaning coming now from her lips.
For surely she must see that nothing was outside of her reach.
She did not further elaborate and I did not ask her.
Instead she moved her sword swiftly through the air and stabbed down and through the chest of the kneeling Brigand.
After it was done, she returned the bloody blade to my hand.
And that is where I shall end this long story of Ruthye, Supergirl, and Krem of the Yellow Hills.



DC NATION INTERVIEW

ROBERT PATTINSON ON THE BATMAN



HOW DID THE OPPORTUNITY COME TO PLAY BATMAN?

In 2018 I met Dylan Clark, the producer of *The Batman*, and really liked him. We started talking about Batman and for some reason that character always stood out as being very special. I got really excited when he said that Matt Reeves was directing. Matt showed me some early storyboards and explained the tone of the film. Then out of the blue I was in a screen test and then the terror kicked in.

WHAT COMICS HELPED INSPIRE YOUR TAKE ON BRUCE WAYNE?

I spent 2019 traveling with my suitcase filled with Batman comics. *Batman: The Long Halloween* was a big influence on the whole movie. I really liked that and *Batman: Dark Victory*. I must have read every single one of the top 20 graphic novels, but I really liked *Batman: Ego*, *Batman: Shaman*, and *Batman: Damned*. I gravitated toward the comics that deal with the psychological implications of dressing up as something almost mythological. I also liked the ones that erred on the side of almost supernatural, where there's a spiritual element to it.

WHAT IS BRUCE'S MINDSET LIKE AT THE BEGINNING OF THE FILM?

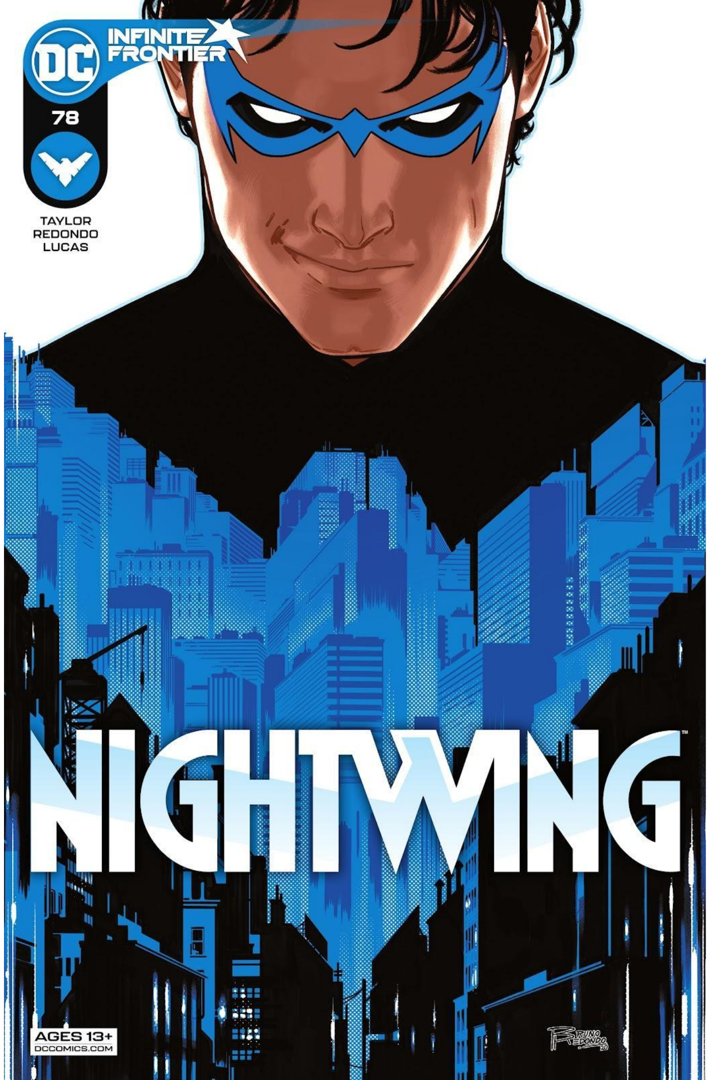
Bruce is obviously quite an obsessive character, and he's had the concept of Batman that he's been building for years. It feels like he has a death wish going out at night. I always get the impression that he wants to keep re-creating the night when his parents died. At the end of the day, he doesn't even really have that much in the way of technology. He has a few layers of bulletproof armor, but that's essentially it.

WHAT WAS IT LIKE TO SEE GOTHAM CITY REALIZED?

The sets are just kind of mind-blowing and beautiful. Preserving the gothic elements gave the city a real history and it felt very tangible. I didn't even realize half the sets were built, I just thought they were already there. There's something about Wayne Manor feeling like it's almost like a cathedral. There's this combination of stunningly beautiful buildings surrounded by decay and grime. That's sort of how Bruce sees the city. It's this city that used to be great, but has been taken over by really toxic elements.

DC COMICS MARIE JAVINS Editor-in-Chief, DC Comics DANIEL CHERRY III Senior VP – General Manager JIM LEE Publisher & Chief Creative Officer DON FALLETTI VP – Manufacturing Operations & Workflow Management LAWRENCE GANEM VP – Talent Services ALISON GILL Senior VP – Manufacturing & Operations JEFFREY KAUFMAN VP – Editorial Strategy & Programming NICK J. NAPOLITANO VP – Manufacturing Administration & Design NANCY SPEARS VP – Revenue

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DC
INFINITE FRONTIER
78
TAYLOR
REDONDO
LUCAS
NIGHTWING
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DC INFINITE FRONTIER
HARLEY QUINN #1
SHE'S RETURNED TO HELP HEAL GOTHAM CITY...BUT NO ONE ASKED HER TO!
A new ongoing series
Written by STEPHANIE PHILLIPS
Art by RILEY ROSSMO
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INFINITE POSSIBILITIES COMING IN MARCH!
#DCInfiniteFrontier


Gotham Heights Park. Then.
I'VE ALWAYS DISLIKED BULLIES.
HA!
LEAVE HIM ALONE!
YOU GOT A PROBLEM, GIRL?
SHELTON LYLE. WHERE PERFECT TEETH MET PRIVILEGE.
HE CAME FROM MONEY. HIS DAD OWNED AN INSURANCE COMPANY RENOWNED FOR NOT PAYING OUT.
PEOPLE PAID FOR A SAFETY NET. THEN SHELTON'S DAD TOOK THE NET AWAY WHEN THEY NEEDED IT MOST.
YEAH. I DO.
HE HAD IT ALL, AND EXPECTED TO ALWAYS GET HIS WAY BECAUSE HE ALWAYS HAD.
HEY!
SERIOUSLY? YOU REALLY WANT TO BUTT IN...


...DICK?
BULLIES DIDN'T REALLY GET TO ME, PERSONALLY.
AFTER TONY ZUCCO KILLED MY PARENTS, THERE WASN'T MUCH LEFT THAT COULD HURT ME.
AND LET'S FACE IT, YOU NEED THICK SKIN TO GO THROUGH LIFE NAMED DICK.
SHELTON WAS RAISED TO BELIEVE HURTING PEOPLE WAS SOMETHING TO ASPIRE TO.
YEAH, I KNOW WHO YOU ARE. I CAUGHT YOUR LAST ACT AT THE CIRCUS. BEST THING I'VE EVER SEEN.
THE FLYING GRAYSONS. GUESS THEY COULDN'T FLY AFTER ALL.
WALK AWAY.
LEAVE THE KID ALONE.
ARE YOU STUPID?
I CAN COUNT, AT LEAST.
I ASSUME YOU CAN'T. OTHERWISE, YOU'D KNOW YOU HAD THREE ON ONE HERE, AND THAT'S PRETTY PATHETIC.
SHELTON WAS TWO YEARS OLDER. HAD ABOUT A FOOT ON ME.


YOU @#$%.
BUT HE'D NEVER CONSIDERED OTHER PEOPLE BEFORE.
IT MEANT HE UNDERESTIMATED ME...
...AND HE LOST SOME PERFECT TEETH.
CRK!
MRRRFF.
OF COURSE HE HAD GOONS. THEY ALWAYS HAVE GOONS.
GUYS DRAWN TO POWER, WHO SEEM TO WANT TO BASK IN THE GLOW OF THE WORST PEOPLE ON EARTH.
I GOT IN A FEW GOOD HITS...
...AND THEN THINGS TURNED.
WOOOO
COPS? OH, YOU'RE IN SO MUCH TROUBLE.
MY DAD OWNS THE POLICE.
YOU THINK THEY'LL LISTEN TO YOU OVER ME?
WHAT DO YOU THINK...


...DAD?
IT WAS NOT SHELTON'S DAY.
I WAS SUPPOSED TO KEEP A LOW PROFILE.
HERE WE ARE, MR. GRAYSON.
BEING DRIVEN HOME BY POLICE COULD NOT BE CALLED **LOW PROFILE.**
WHOA! YOU LIVE IN A ***CASTLE?***
NO.
...KINDA.
DO YOU HAVE A ***DRAGON*** IN A ***MOAT?***
NO.
DO YOUR ***DISHES*** SPONTANEOUSLY BREAK INTO ***MUSICAL NUMBERS?***
NO.
IT WAS NICE TO MEET YOU, DICK.
IF YOU EVER GET LOCKED IN THE TOWER AND NEED TO BE RESCUED, JUST SEND YOUR FAIRY GODMOTHER TO FIND ME.
I KNEW BRUCE WAS GOING TO BE ANGRY...


...BUT BRUCE WASN'T IN.
WELL, THANK YOU FOR BRINGING HIM HOME, ***DETECTIVE GORDON.***
I WAS IN THE MIDDLE OF THOSE DISHES, MASTER GRAYSON.
YOU REALIZE THIS IS MY JOB?
YOU CAN DRY IF YOU WANT.
SURE. AND YOU REALIZE I'M NEVER GONNA BE COOL WITH THAT?
MASTER GRAYSON...
I JUST WANT TO HELP.
I KNOW. YOU SEEM TO LIVE BY THOSE WORDS.
YOU ***FOUGHT*** THREE STUDENTS?
THERE WAS A KID. THEY WERE ***HURTING*** HIM. I'M SORRY, ALFRED.
YOU'RE...?
MASTER BRUCE MAY FEEL YOU SHOULD ONLY BE A HERO WHEN WEARING A COSTUME.
BUT ***I'M*** GLAD ***DICK GRAYSON*** STEPS UP WHEN SOMEONE IS IN NEED.
IT TAKES A DIFFERENT HERO TO HELP WITHOUT A MASK.



DC COMICS PROUDLY PRESENTS:
NIGHTWING
LEAPING INTO THE LIGHT PART 1
TOM TAYLOR writer BRUNO REDONDO artist
ADRIANO LUCAS color WES ABBOTT letters
BRUNO REDONDO cover SKAN variant cover
BEN MEARES assistant editor JESSICA CHEN editor
BEN ABERNATHY group editor
Nightwing created by MARV WOLFMAN & GEORGE PÉREZ


Now.
BLÜDHAVEN DOESN'T HAVE THE MADNESS OF GOTHAM...
...IT'S JUST CRUEL.
HAHAHAHA
HAHA
DO IT AGAIN!
HAHA
HAHAHAHA
SO COOL!
HAHAHA
OH, MAN!
DUDE!
HAHAHA
HAHAHAHA
KICK THAT FREAK!
AND THE PROBLEM IS, CRUELTY TEACHES CRUELTY.
YOU KNOW...


...I'D USUALLY OPEN WITH SOMETHING DISARMING AND WITTY.
BUT THEN, I'M NOT USUALLY THIS DISGUSTED.
WE'RE JUST HAVING SOME FUN, MAN!
YOUR IDEA OF FUN IS TORTURING SMALL ANIMALS?
YOU NEED TO BROADEN YOUR HORIZONS, PEOPLE. FIND SOMETHING LESS DESTRUCTIVE.
MAYBE CATCH A MOVIE. TAKE UP ICE-SKATING...


I GUESS THE FUN'S OVER, THEN.
CLK
I'M NOT LETTING YOU SHOOT A PUPPY IN THE HEAD--
TOK
--IN MY EXPERIENCE, THE NEXT THING YOU KNOW, THE DOG WILL HAVE LOST ITS MEMORY AND BE DRIVING A CAB.
AND WITH OR WITHOUT AMNESIA, A DOG SHOULDN'T BE BEHIND THE WHEEL OF A CAR.


RRRR.
HEY, IT'S OKAY.
I'M NOT GOING TO HURT--
RRRR!
YOW!
THIS POOR GIRL HAS COME THROUGH A LOT AND DOESN'T TRUST ANYONE.
I REMEMBER THAT WELL.
RIGHT. VET FOR YOU.
DOCTOR FOR ME.


I'VE ALWAYS DISLIKED BULLIES. AND THIS CITY IS *RUN* BY THEM.
THEY'RE HERE, **MR. DESMOND.**
GOOD, **COMMISSIONER MACLEAN.**
I USED TO STAND UP TO **BLOCKBUSTER,** AND ALL THE OTHER CRIMINALS. BUT I WENT AWAY, AND THEY GOT **WORSE.**
I AM NOT HAPPY, MR. MAYOR.
BLÜDHAVEN IS CORRUPT TO ITS CORE...
I DO HAVE OFFICE HOURS, ROLAND. ***AND*** AN OFFICE.
MEETING AT NIGHT UNDER A BRIDGE FEELS LIKE A CERTAIN WAY TO ATTRACT TROLLS.
...AND TOO MANY PEOPLE HAVE RESIGNED THEMSELVES TO NOT BEING ABLE TO FIGHT AGAINST IT.


A NUMBER OF MY OPERATIONS HAVE STAGNATED, MR. MAYOR.
YOU HAVE SPREADSHEETS? REALLY PUTTING THE "ORGANIZED" IN ORGANIZED CRIME, THERE.
DON'T PRETEND TO BE SHOCKED BY A WELL-RUN OPERATION, MS. COUNCIL PRESIDENT.
I ***KNOW*** WHO YOUR FAMILY ARE. I KNOW WHERE YOU'VE COME FROM.
THIS IS ***YOUR*** BUSINESS, BLOCKBUSTER. WHAT DO YOU EXPECT ***ME*** TO DO?
I EXPECTED YOU TO DO AS YOU WERE TOLD.
BUT YOU FAILED ME.
ARE WE JUST HERE SO YOU CAN INTIMIDATE ME?
NO.
WHAT ARE YOU...?
YOU'RE HERE SO I CAN MAKE AN EXAMPLE OF YOU.
HMMF!


THE MAYOR'S BODY WON'T BE FOUND.
AS COUNCIL PRESIDENT, YOU ARE NEXT IN LINE, *MELINDA.*
YOUR JOB IS TO SERVE THIS CITY.
I *AM* THIS CITY.
DO YOU UNDERSTAND?
OF COURSE.
I'VE SPOKEN TO YOUR FATHER. HE'S A KILLER, BUT HE'S NOT A LIAR.
I UNDERSTAND THE TWO OF YOU ARE ESTRANGED. NONETHELESS, *TONY* SPOKE HIGHLY OF YOU.
CONGRATULATIONS, *MAYOR ZUCCO.*


SIX STITCHES AND A VET BILL THAT HURTS MORE THAN THE BITE, AND I'M HEADING HOME.
THE WHOLE APARTMENT BLOCK IS MINE.
I BOUGHT IT YEARS AGO, BACK WHEN I HAD WAYNE MONEY. BUT THAT'S LONG GONE.*
I'M RUNNING OUT OF CASH, AND I DON'T EVEN WANT TO THINK ABOUT PUTTING THE RENT UP.
*SEE *BATMAN* #101 FOR WHERE THE MONEY WENT! --JESS
SOMETHING'S WRONG.
SOMEONE'S IN MY APARTMENT.


WHOEVER'S IN HERE, I'M NOT GIVING THEM A CHANCE TO REACT.
GO IN FAST. CATCH THEM BY--
HUH?
THP
THD
SURPRISE.
BABS?


IF YOU'RE GOING TO OPERATE AS A SUPERHERO OUT OF AN APARTMENT, YOU NEED BETTER SECURITY.
I HAVE A CUTTING-EDGE SECURITY SYSTEM.
AND ANYONE CAN WALK RIGHT IN HERE WITH YEARS OF TRESPASSING SKILLS AND ADVANCED DEFENSE-DISABLING TECHNOLOGY.
DID YOU JUST COME TO BLÜDHAVEN TO POINT OUT MY SHORTCOMINGS?
NO. THAT'S AN ADDED BONUS.
THERE'S SOMETHING I NEED TO SHARE WITH--
ARF!
WE'RE THREE STORIES UP.
YES.
DOES BLÜDHAVEN HAVE FLYING DOGS?
I MEAN, IT WOULDN'T BE THE WEIRDEST THING I'VE ENCOUNTERED IN THIS CITY.


!
WHAT'S HER NAME?
SHE'S GOING TO THE POUND TOMORROW. HER NEXT OWNERS WILL GIVE HER A NAME.
HA! SURE. YOU'RE ***SO*** WELL-KNOWN FOR TURNING YOUR BACK ON INNOCENT CREATURES IN NEED.
THE ***SECOND*** SHE CAME THROUGH THAT WINDOW, THIS BECAME HER FOREVER HOME.
JUST ACCEPT YOU HAVE A FUR BABY NOW, DICK GRAYSON.
BABS... WHY ARE YOU HERE?
BECAUSE... WELL, AS ORACLE, I WAS CHOSEN TO BE THE EXECUTOR OF ALFRED PENNYWORTH'S WILL.
RIGHT.
YOU MISSED THE READING. YOU WERE...
I WAS SOMEONE ELSE.
YEAH.
DICK. YOU SHOULD TAKE A SEAT.
THIS IS... WELL, IT'S GOING TO BE A LOT TO TAKE IN.

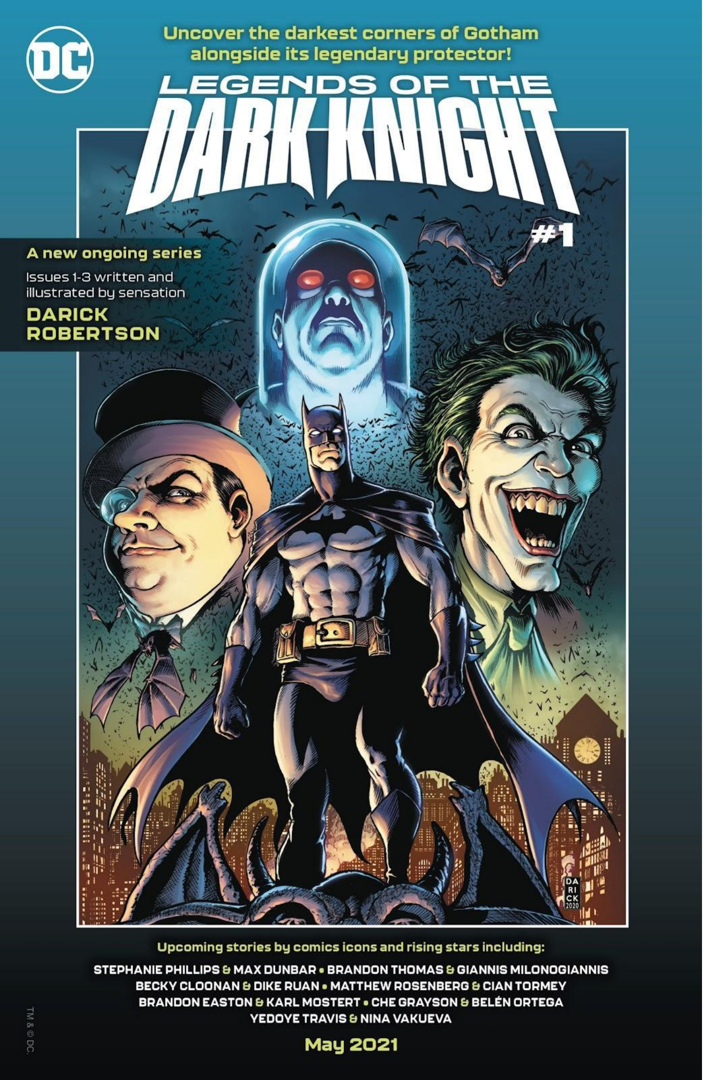

I...I DON'T UNDERSTAND.
I'M NOT SURPRISED. IT'S A WHOLE LOT OF ZEROES.
HE WAS...?
HE WAS.
WHY WOULD A BILLIONAIRE MAKE ME SANDWICHES AND DO MY WASHING?
FOR THE SAME REASON A BILLIONAIRE WOULD FIGHT CRIME IN GOTHAM.
IT'S WHAT HE ***WANTED*** TO DO.
THIS MAY EXPLAIN IT BETTER.
I HAVEN'T OPENED IT.


Master Grayson.
Please don't be alarmed, I didn't foresee my own death.
Given our line of work, I write one of these every year. It seems prudent.
I'm sure the fortune I'm leaving to you comes as something of a shock.
As Master Wayne's legal guardian, I was given a large amount of Wayne Industries stock. I was also given a ludicrous amount of wealth I had no need for.
I invested much of this wisely and ethically and had planned to find a place where it would do the most good.
In fact, I planned to come to you for advice.
Like Bruce, your mind is astonishing. You can think in ways no one else can. You are a problem solver and the world is full of problems.
I couldn't think of better hands to leave this fortune in.
I believe you will see this, not as a personal gain, but as an opportunity.
Because I believe in Dick Grayson.


I believe in the boy who always stepped up when someone was in need.
I believe in the man who just wants to help.
Without wanting to apply too much pressure, I believe you can be one of the greatest forces for good this world has ever seen.
Whatever you choose to do, please know I am exceedingly proud of you.
Proud of your heart, proud of your compassion, proud of your humor, your optimism, and your strength in the face of everything that confronts you.
And, above all, though we rarely say it aloud...
...I am so very proud to call you my son.


Upper Blüdhaven.
WHAT HAPPENED, MELINDA?
BLOCKBUSTER DID WHAT BLOCKBUSTER DOES. IT WASN'T SUBTLE.
SO...?
THE CITY IS MINE. I'M MAYOR.
OH @#$%.
YOU READY FOR THIS?
I AM.
WHAT ABOUT DICK GRAYSON?
I'M NOT READY FOR HIM YET.
YOU CAN'T WAIT TOO LONG. YOU MAY NOT GET ANOTHER CHANCE.
I KNOW.
SOON.
THE FLYING GRAYSONS
NEXT: GHOSTS FROM THE PAST


DC
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YEDOYE TRAVIS & NINA VAKUEVA
May 2021
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I'VE SPENT MY LIFE
WORKING WITHOUT
A SAFETY NET...



...BECAUSE I'VE ALWAYS HAD SOMEONE TO CATCH ME IF I FELL.
MY PARENTS.
WAY TO FLY, KID.
MY FATHER.
HNF.
ON YOUR FEET.
ARE YOU JUST GOING TO KNOCK ME DOWN AGAIN?
IT DEPENDS ON HOW FAST YOU LEARN.
MY OTHER FATHER.
I TAKE IT YOU AND MASTER BRUCE ARE HAVING ONE OF YOUR LITTLE TIFFS AGAIN?
HE FIRED ME, ALFRED.
COME. I'LL MAKE YOU SOMETHING WARM AND SOOTHING.
ALFRED, I'M EIGHTEEN YEARS OLD.
YES. SO YOU WOULD THINK YOU'D KNOW HOW TO ACCEPT MY OFFER WITH A "THANK YOU" BY NOW.
MY FRIENDS.
AND MY BROTHERS.
WE ALL NEED SOMEONE TO CATCH US WHEN WE FALL...


...SOMEONE WHO MAKES US FEEL *SAFE*.
SHE'S OUT LIKE A LIGHT.
SHE'S HAD A TOUGH DAY.
ALSO, SHE ATE DOUBLE HER WEIGHT IN KIBBLE.
YEAH... I WONDER WHAT THAT *TASTES* LIKE?
I'M GUESSING YOU HAVEN'T EATEN.
NO.
YOU HUNGRY?
YEP.
COME ON. I KNOW A NICE PLACE NEARBY.


NIGHTWING
LEAPING INTO THE LIGHT PART 2
TOM TAYLOR writer BRUNO REDONDO artist
ADRIANO LUCAS colors WES ABBOTT letters
BRUNO REDONDO cover
JAMAL CAMPBELL variant cover
BEN MEARES assistant editor JESSICA CHEN editor
BEN ABERNATHY group editor
Nightwing created by MARV WOLFMAN & GEORGE PÉREZ
MARV & GEORGE'S PIZZA
24 H
TWO SLICES, PLEASE.
SERIOUSLY?
2 x 1!!!
NEW OFFERS
Going out of business
FOR SALE
WHAT?
YOU'RE A *BILLIONAIRE* NOW.
OH, RIGHT.
FOUR SLICES, PLEASE.
I WANT TO SHOW YOU SOMETHING.
FOR RENT
FOR RENT
BLÜDHAVEN STARTED AS A WHALING TOWN.
THIS FOUNTAIN WAS BUILT BACK WHEN PEOPLE IN THIS CITY BELIEVED THEY COULD TAKE ON MONSTERS AND WIN.
I LIKE THAT IT'S STILL STANDING.


YOU OKAY? YOU SEEM UNUSUALLY CONTEMPLATIVE.
I FORGOT WHO I WAS.
SURE, BUT YOU WERE SHOT IN THE HEAD. DON'T BEAT YOURSELF UP ABOUT IT.
BUT WHAT DID I LEAVE BEHIND? WHAT DID I CREATE THAT KEPT GOING WHEN I WAS GONE?
WHAT'S SO HEROIC ABOUT PUNCHING BAD GUYS AND THEN WAITING TO PUNCH MORE?
DICK...
I KNOW, IT'S AN OVERSIMPLIFICATION.
YOU'VE SAVED *LIVES.* I'M PRETTY SURE YOU'VE SAVED *THE WORLD* MORE THAN ONCE.
AND IT'S NOT LIKE YOU TO HAVE CONFIDENCE ISSUES.
I MEAN, YOU WEAR THE TIGHTEST COSTUME OF ANY OF US.
I JUST... I WANT TO DO MORE.
AND WITH EVERYTHING ALFRED LEFT ME, I GUESS I *CAN.*
BUT I'M NOT SURE WHERE TO FOCUS.
WELL, YOU'RE ONE OF THE WORLD'S GREATEST PROBLEM SOLVERS, SO I'M SURE YOU'LL WORK IT OUT.
I'VE ALWAYS THOUGHT *BATMAN* COULD HAVE DONE MORE AS BRUCE WAYNE.
I'M SURE THAT'S AN INSIGHT HE WOULD TAKE *WELL.*
OH YEAH. BRUCE *LOVES* PERSONAL CRITICISM--


EXCUSE ME?
SORRY TO BUG YOU, BUT COULD YOU SPARE SOME CHANGE?
I... DON'T REALLY CARRY CASH.
YEAH. MOST PEOPLE DON'T THESE DAYS.
THANKS ANYWAY.
HEY...
WAIT!
LET ME BUY YOU SOME FOOD. *LOTS* OF FOOD. AND WHATEVER ELSE YOU NEED.
I...
AND INVITE FRIENDS. I MEAN ANYONE YOU KNOW IN THE AREA WHO COULD DO WITH A MEAL. DON'T HOLD BACK...


MARV & GEORGE'S PIZZA 24 H
"...THE MORE THE MERRIER."
2 x 1!!!
going out business
JUST KEEP 'EM COMING, SHANNON.
UH... ARE YOU OKAY IF WE TAKE OURS TO GO?
OF COURSE.
PIZZA
THANKS FOR THIS.
IT'S NOTHING REALLY, *MARTIN.*
I'M GOING TO BOOK YOU AND YOUR BOY A ROOM AT THE BLÜDHAVEN THREE SEASONS.
SERIOUSLY?
IT'LL BE PAID UP FOR THE MONTH, BUT I'LL CHECK IN AFTER THAT AND SEE WHAT ELSE I CAN ARRANGE.


HUH...
OH NO.
WHAT IS IT?
I THINK THOSE KIDS TOOK MY WALLET.
WOW.
NEVER TELL BATMAN ABOUT THIS.
TIC TIC TIC
TOO LATE. I'VE ALREADY PUT IT IN THE GROUP CHAT.
DING!
COME ON!
YOU MIGHT WANT TO PUT THAT ON SILENT. *CASS* HAS NO SELF-CONTROL WHEN IT COMES TO EMOJIS.
DING! DING! DING! DING! DING! DING! DING! DING! DING! DING! DING! DING! DING!



THAT LOOKS LIKE GOOD PIZZA.
OH, HEY. YOU WANT A SLICE?
IT'S MORE OF A *STAB* THAN A SLICE.
I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU'RE--
TELL YOUR KID TO RUN.
ELLIOT. GO BACK TO THE PIZZA SHOP. STAY THERE.
DAD?
JUST GO.
IT'LL BE OKAY.



IT'S *NOT* GOING TO BE OKAY.
PLEASE. I DON'T HAVE ANYTHING.
YOU HAVE *EXACTLY* WHAT I WANT.
SHLK
HRK--
YOU HAD A *HEART.*


THERE'S A MICRO-TRACKER INSIDE MY WALLET.
I CAN FOLLOW IT AND LINK UP TO YOUR EARPIECE.
BOOOP
YOU DON'T WANT TO JOIN ME?
I HAVE SOME PRETTY NEW TECHNOLOGY HOLDING MY SPINE TOGETHER.*
I'M HAPPY TO DO MOST THINGS--EAT PIZZA IN THE PARK, TAKE DOWN LOW-LEVEL THUGS--BUT LEAPING FROM ROOFTOPS SEEMS...UNWISE.
HERE. I WANTED TO TRIAL THIS ANYWAY.
DEET
I'LL SEE WHAT YOU SEE...
*SEE BATGIRL: THE JOKER WAR --JESS


"...WHEN YOU'RE OUT THERE."
TRACKER'S ON THE MOVE.
ONE BLOCK WEST.
ASIDE FROM YOUR CREDIT CARD, WHAT'S EVEN IN YOUR WALLET?
ABOUT THIRTY BUCKS, SOME BUSINESS CARDS I'LL NEVER LOOK AT, AND A FINE COLLECTION OF OLD RECEIPTS.
RIGHT, WELL, YOUR POCKET-TRASH COLLECTION IS APPROACHING ON THE STREET BELOW YOU.
OH NO.
CAN YOU BE MORE SPECIFIC WITH YOUR "OH NO"?
CAN YOU SEE WHO I CAN SEE?
IS THAT...?


BOSS MARONI.
I DON'T RECOGNIZE THE WOMAN HE'S TALKING TO, BUT BESIDES BLOCKBUSTER, SALVATORE MARONI IS THE MOST POWERFUL CRIMINAL IN THE CITY.
THIS COULD HAVE WAITED 'TIL TOMORROW, MR. MARONI.
NONSENSE, MELINDA. YOU'RE A ZUCCO.
I WANTED TO LET YOU KNOW THE WHOLE FAMILY IS PROUD OF YOU. TO HAVE ONE OF OUR OWN PEOPLE RISE TO MAYOR IS--
IS NOT CONFIRMED YET.
REALLY? DO YOU THINK YOUR PREDECESSOR'S HEAD IS GOING TO BE UN-CRUSHED?*
CAN WE PLEASE NOT DISCUSS THIS OUT IN THE OPEN?
*SEE LAST ISSUE! --JESS
BOSS MARONI IS CRUEL, VINDICTIVE, AND HAS NO REGARD FOR HUMAN LIFE...
...AND IS PROBABLY GOING TO REACT VERY POORLY TO BEING ROBBED.

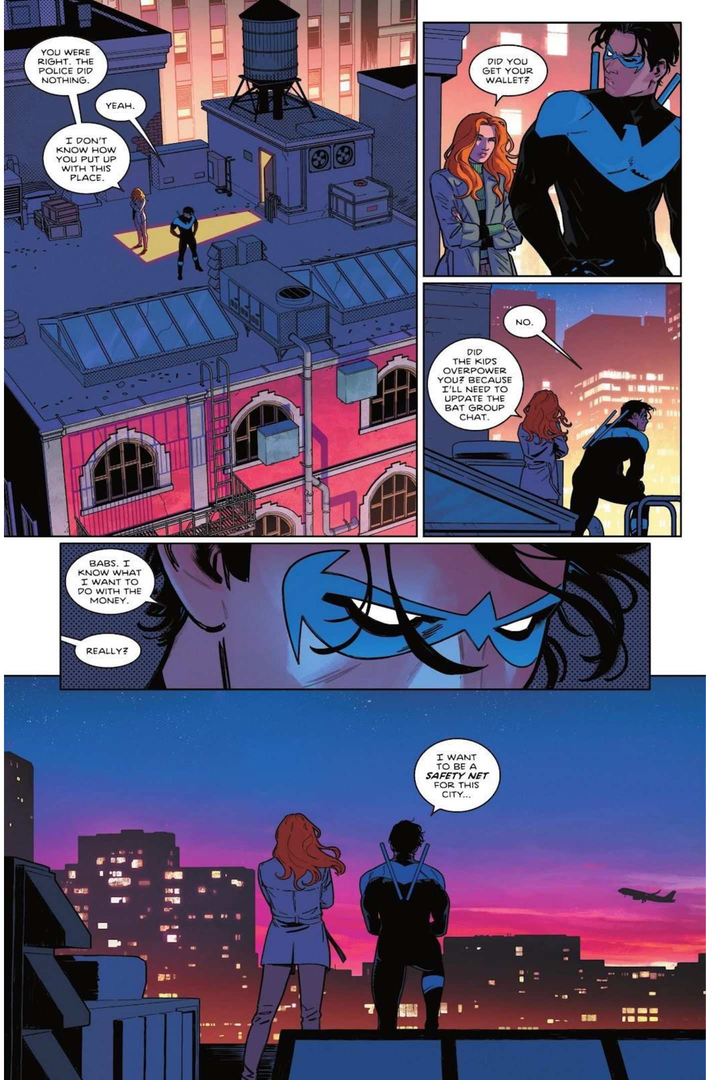

ARE THOSE KIDS SERIOUSLY GOING TO...?
LOOKS LIKE.
OH, THAT'S ILL-ADVISED.
JUST KEEP WALKING, KIDS. THESE GUYS ARE "SHOOT FIRST AND ASK QUESTIONS NEVER" PEOPLE.
OH NO.
DAMN IT.
HEY!
HOLD IT!

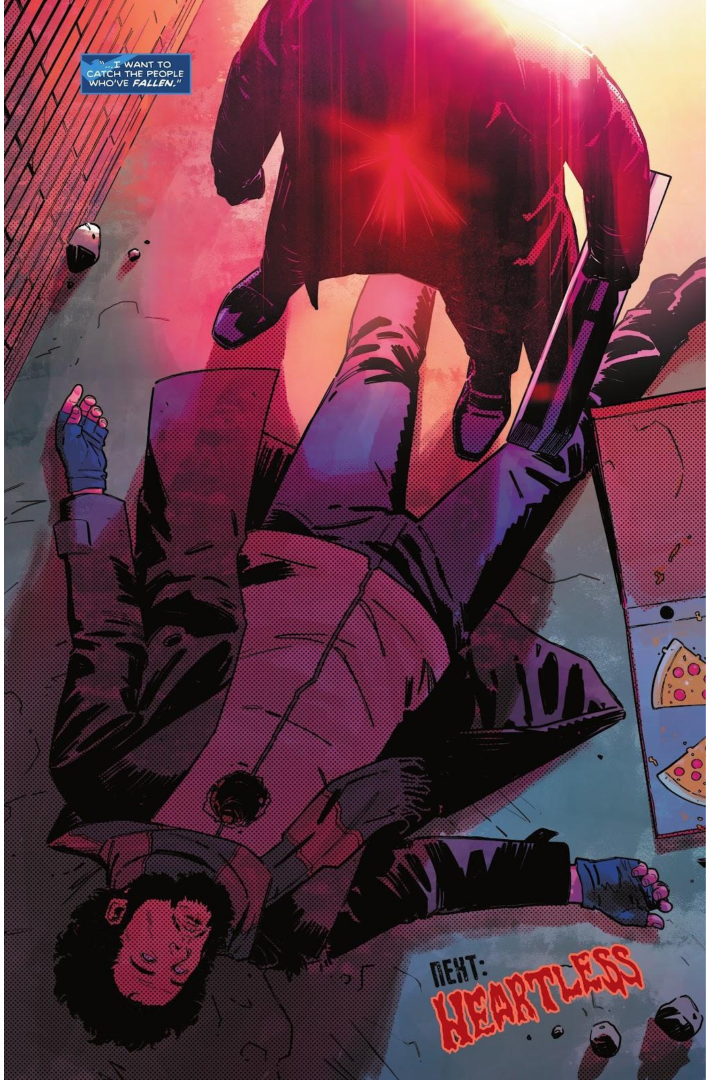



WE COULD HAVE AVOIDED ALL OF THIS IF WE'D JUST STAYED IN AND EATEN KIBBLE.
NAH. THIS IS FAR BETTER.
YOU CAN'T BEAT THE COMBINATION OF PIZZA AND TAKING OUT OVERCONFIDENT GOONS.
THEY DO GO WELL TOGETHER.
THIS IS DEFINITELY BETTER. IT'S A WHOLE LOT SIMPLER THAN WORKING OUT HOW TO DEAL WITH BEING A BILLIONAIRE.
YOUR WALLET HAS STOPPED MOVING THREE BLOCKS AWAY ON THE LEFT. UNDER NGUYEN STREET BRIDGE.
YOU GO AFTER THE KIDS. I'LL CALL THE POLICE.
THERE'S NO POINT. THEY'RE MARONI'S PEOPLE. THEY WON'T BE CHARGED.
THEY WERE ABOUT TO KILL CHILDREN.
I KNOW. AND THEY'LL STILL WALK.
THE LAW HAS NEVER APPLIED TO THE PEOPLE WHO CONTROL BLÜDHAVEN.
I'M STILL CALLING. ORACLE OUT.
BABS IS GOING TO BE DISAPPOINTED, BUT SHE SHOULD EXPERIENCE THE INJUSTICE OF BLÜDHAVEN FOR HERSELF.
THIS CITY HAS FORGOTTEN HOW TO TAKE ON MONSTERS AND WIN.


IT'S NOT THE ONLY THING THIS CITY HAS FORGOTTEN. IT'S FORGOTTEN A LOT OF PEOPLE, TOO.
HEY!
A TENT CITY FOR HOMELESS PEOPLE.
BUT, BY THE LOOKS OF IT, NO ONE HERE IS OVER SIXTEEN.
THEY'RE ALL JUST KIDS FENDING FOR THEMSELVES.
ARE YOU HIM?
WHO?
THE MAN WITHOUT A HEART.


PLEASE DON'T HURT US.
OH MAN.
I'M NOT...I'D NEVER...
I'M SORRY.
KEEP WHAT YOU TOOK. YOU NEED IT MORE THAN...JUST KEEP IT.
BLÜDHAVEN NEVER FAILS TO HURT ME.


YOU WERE RIGHT. THE POLICE DID NOTHING.
YEAH.
I DON'T KNOW HOW YOU PUT UP WITH THIS PLACE.
DID YOU GET YOUR WALLET?
NO.
DID THE KIDS OVERPOWER YOU? BECAUSE I'LL NEED TO UPDATE THE BAT GROUP CHAT.
BABS. I KNOW WHAT I WANT TO DO WITH THE MONEY.
REALLY?
I WANT TO BE A ***SAFETY NET*** FOR THIS CITY...


"...I WANT TO CATCH THE PEOPLE WHO'VE *FALLEN.*"
NEXT: HEARTLESS



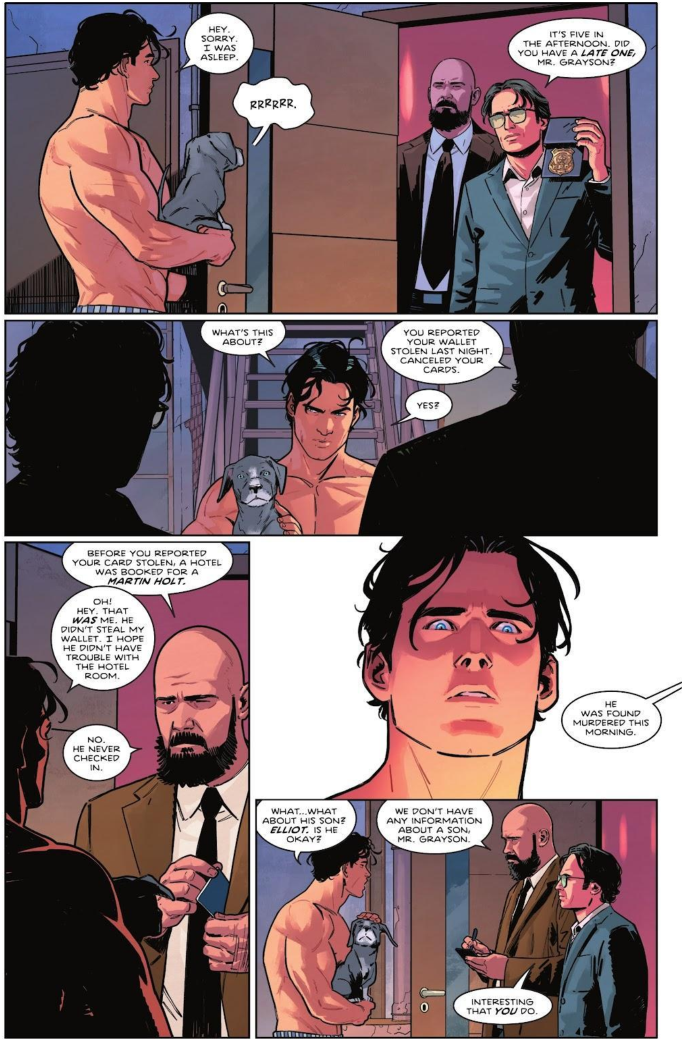
DC
NIGHTWING
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TAYLOR
REDONDO
LUCAS
INTRODUCING
HEARTLESS
AGES 13+
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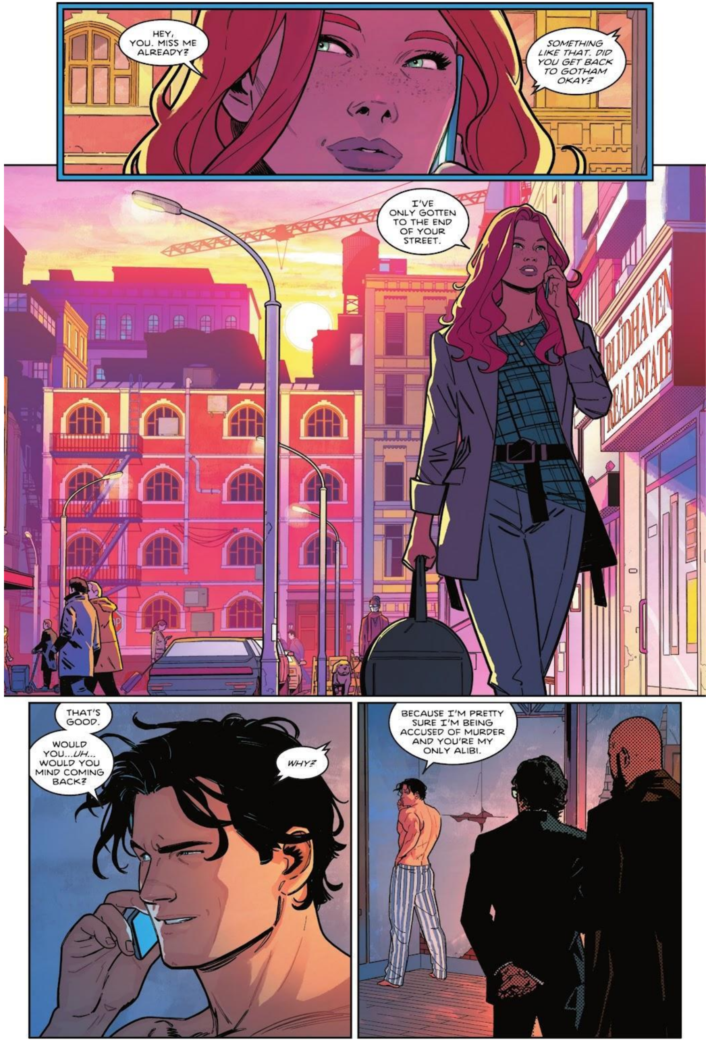


BATMAN VS. SNAKE EYES!
BATMAN
ZEROPOINT
Each print issue includes a redeemable code for a bonus digital cosmetic in *Fortnite* inspired by the comic. Get the new Catwoman's Grappling Claw Pickaxe with issue # 3. As a bonus item, fans who redeem all six codes will unlock a new Armored Batman Zero Outfit!
FORTNITE
Don't miss issue 3 of this 6-issue crossover event
ISSUE #3 LAUNCHES May 18, 2021.
Written by CHRISTOS GAGE
Concept and story consultant DONALD MUSTARD
Art by REILLY BROWN
EPIC GAMES
DC

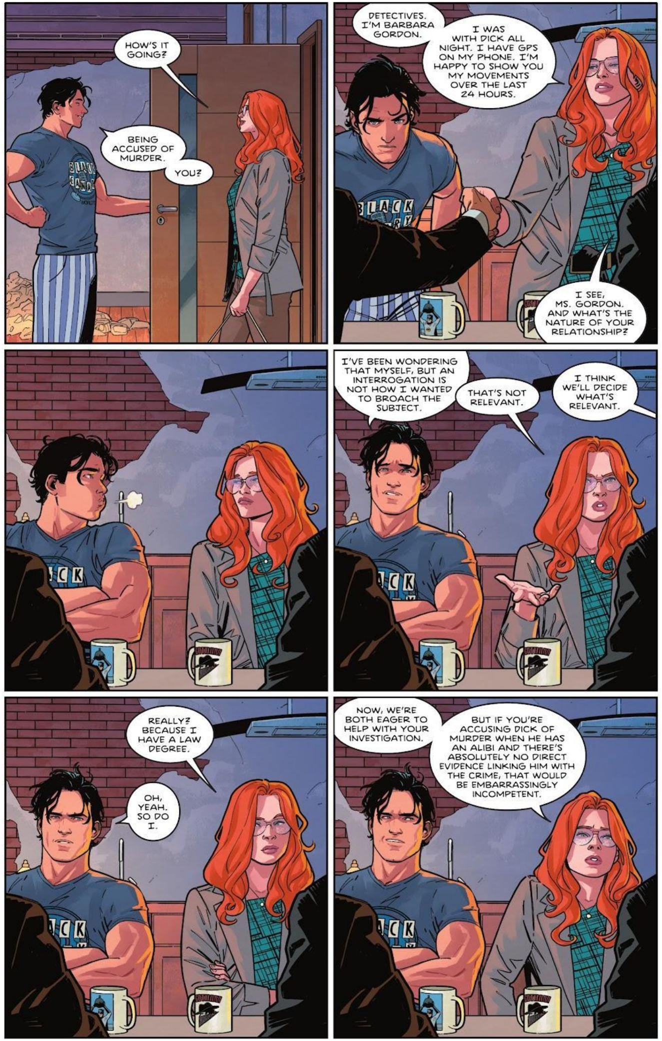


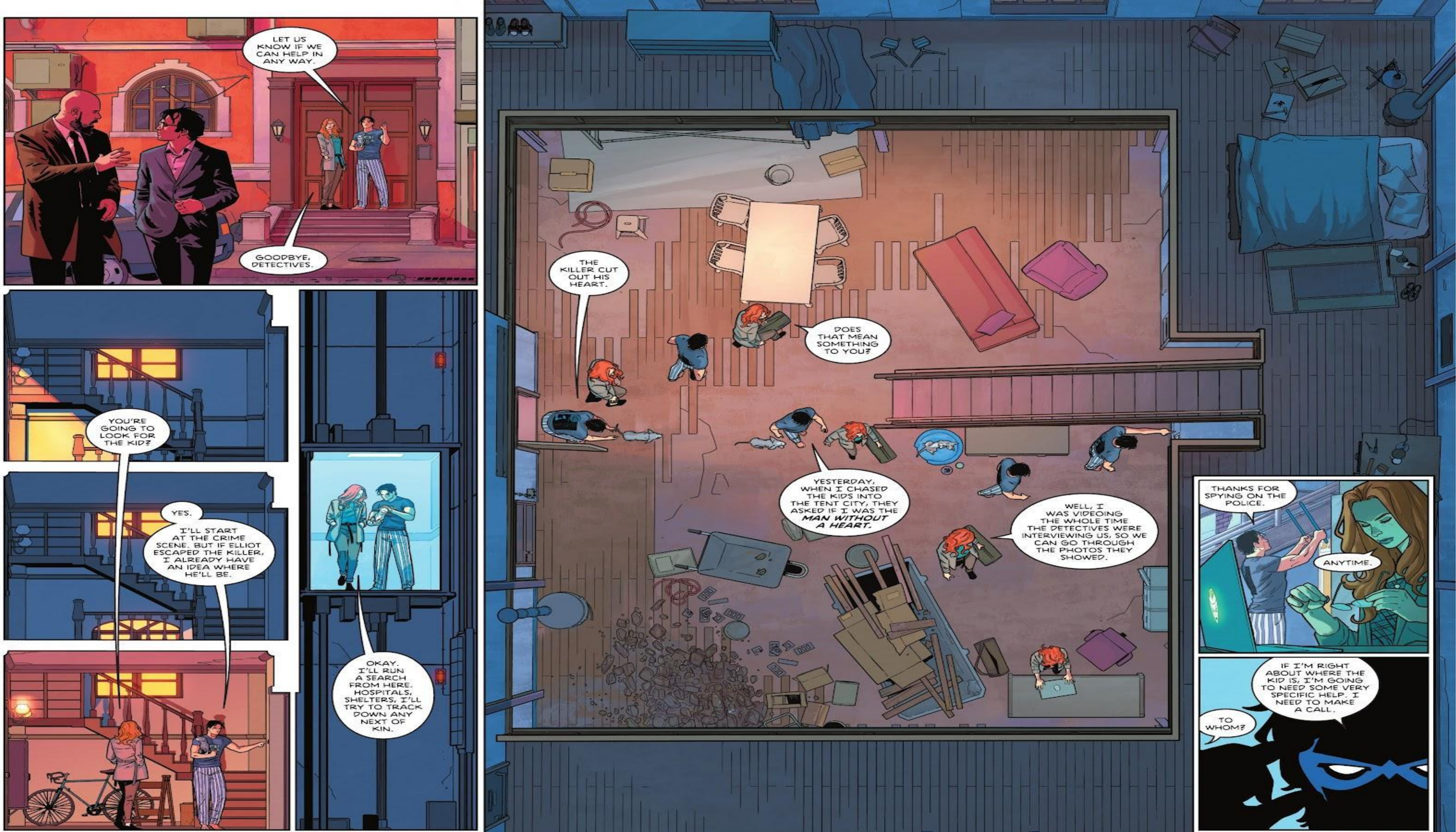
Dick Grayson's apartment. Blüdhaven.
ARF! ARF! ARF!
ARF!
THIS MAY NOT WORK OUT.
NIGHTWING
LEAPING INTO THE LIGHT PART 3
TOM TAYLOR writer BRUNO REDONDO artist
ADRIANO LUCAS colors WES ABBOTT letters
BRUNO REDONDO cover
JAMAL CAMPBELL variant cover
BEN MEARES assistant editor JESSICA CHEN editor
BEN ABERNATHY group editor
Nightwing created by MARV WOLFMAN & GEORGE PÉREZ
ARF! ARF! ARF! ARF!
PLEASE STOP.
ARF! ARF! ARF! ARF! ARF! ARF!
ARF! ARF! ARF! ARF! ARF! ARF! ARF!
I DON'T MIND IF YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND "SIT" OR "STAY," BUT YOU NEED TO UNDERSTAND "I WORK NIGHTS."
ARF! ARF! ARF! ARF! ARF!
KNOCK KNOCK KNOCK
ARF! ARF! ARF!
MR. GRAYSON.
POLICE. WE'D LIKE A WORD.


HEY. SORRY. I WAS ASLEEP.
RRRRRR.
IT'S FIVE IN THE AFTERNOON. DID YOU HAVE A *LATE ONE,* MR. GRAYSON?
WHAT'S THIS ABOUT?
YOU REPORTED YOUR WALLET STOLEN LAST NIGHT. CANCELED YOUR CARDS.
YES?
BEFORE YOU REPORTED YOUR CARD STOLEN, A HOTEL WAS BOOKED FOR A *MARTIN HOLT.*
OH! HEY. THAT *WAS* ME. HE DIDN'T STEAL MY WALLET. I HOPE HE DIDN'T HAVE TROUBLE WITH THE HOTEL ROOM.
NO. HE NEVER CHECKED IN.
HE WAS FOUND MURDERED THIS MORNING.
WHAT...WHAT ABOUT HIS SON? *ELLIOT.* IS HE OKAY?
WE DON'T HAVE ANY INFORMATION ABOUT A SON, MR. GRAYSON.
INTERESTING THAT *YOU* DO.


HEY, YOU. MISS ME ALREADY?
SOMETHING LIKE THAT. DID YOU GET BACK TO GOTHAM OKAY?
I'VE ONLY GOTTEN TO THE END OF YOUR STREET.
BLÜDHAVEN REALESTATE
THAT'S GOOD.
WOULD YOU...*UH*... WOULD YOU MIND COMING BACK?
WHY?
BECAUSE I'M PRETTY SURE I'M BEING ACCUSED OF MURDER AND YOU'RE MY ONLY ALIBI.


I UNDERSTAND YOU USED TO BE ONE OF US, MR. GRAYSON.
WHY DID YOU LEAVE THE BLÜDHAVEN POLICE?
THERE WERE TOO MANY CRIMINALS.
MR. HOLT WAS FOUND DEAD, THIS MORNING. HIS HEART WAS REMOVED.
WE DON'T KNOW HOW. DO *YOU?*
WHY WOULD I?
YOU PAID FOR A HOTEL ROOM FOR HIM.
I DON'T WANT TO THEORIZE ABOUT WHY. BUT I'M THINKING HE DIDN'T LIKE YOUR PROPOSITION, SOMETHING WENT WRONG, AND YOU CUT OUT HIS HEART.
JUST LIKE YOU'VE BEEN TAKING THE HEARTS OF HOMELESS PEOPLE ALL OVER THE CITY.
KNOCK KNOCK
ARF! ARF! ARF!


HOW'S IT GOING?
BEING ACCUSED OF MURDER.
YOU?
DETECTIVES. I'M BARBARA GORDON.
I WAS WITH DICK ALL NIGHT. I HAVE GPS ON MY PHONE. I'M HAPPY TO SHOW YOU MY MOVEMENTS OVER THE LAST 24 HOURS.
I SEE, MS. GORDON. AND WHAT'S THE NATURE OF YOUR RELATIONSHIP?
I'VE BEEN WONDERING THAT MYSELF, BUT AN INTERROGATION IS NOT HOW I WANTED TO BROACH THE SUBJECT.
THAT'S NOT RELEVANT.
I THINK WE'LL DECIDE WHAT'S RELEVANT.
REALLY? BECAUSE I HAVE A LAW DEGREE.
OH, YEAH. SO DO I.
NOW, WE'RE BOTH EAGER TO HELP WITH YOUR INVESTIGATION.
BUT IF YOU'RE ACCUSING DICK OF MURDER WHEN HE HAS AN ALIBI AND THERE'S ABSOLUTELY NO DIRECT EVIDENCE LINKING HIM WITH THE CRIME, THAT WOULD BE EMBARRASSINGLY INCOMPETENT.



LET US KNOW IF WE CAN HELP IN ANY WAY.
GOODBYE, DETECTIVES.
YOU'RE GOING TO LOOK FOR THE KID?
YES.
I'LL START AT THE CRIME SCENE. BUT IF ELLIOT ESCAPED THE KILLER, I ALREADY HAVE AN IDEA WHERE HE'LL BE.
OKAY. I'LL RUN A SEARCH FROM HERE. HOSPITALS, SHELTERS, I'LL TRY TO TRACK DOWN ANY NEXT OF KIN.
THE KILLER CUT OUT HIS HEART.
DOES THAT MEAN SOMETHING TO YOU?
YESTERDAY, WHEN I CHASED THE KIDS INTO THE TENT CITY, THEY ASKED IF I WAS THE *MAN WITHOUT A HEART.*
WELL, I WAS VIDEOING THE WHOLE TIME THE DETECTIVES WERE INTERVIEWING US, SO WE CAN GO THROUGH THE PHOTOS THEY SHOWED.
THANKS FOR SPYING ON THE POLICE.
ANYTIME.
IF I'M RIGHT ABOUT WHERE THE KID IS, I'M GOING TO NEED SOME VERY SPECIFIC HELP. I NEED TO MAKE A CALL.
TO WHOM?


"MY BROTHER."
TIM DRAKE. THOUGHT OF BY MANY AS THE BEST ROBIN. I TOTALLY GET IT.
BATMAN WANTED ME TO GIVE YOU SOMETHING.
IT'S A WALLET CHAIN. IT MEANS KIDS CAN'T STEAL YOUR MONEY.
AND AS AN ADDED BONUS, YOU CAN FRONT A SOFT-METAL BAND IN THE EARLY 2000s.
I'M NEVER LIVING THIS DOWN, AM I?
OF COURSE NOT.
COME ON. WE'LL TAKE THE TRAIN HOME.

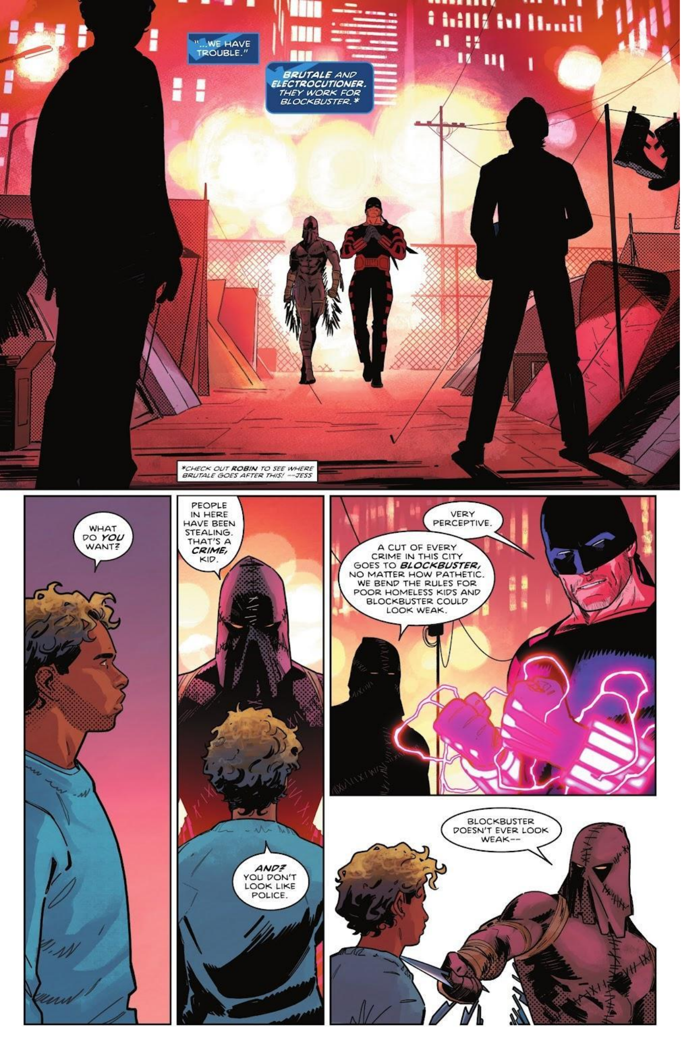

I HEARD ABOUT WHAT ALFRED LEFT YOU. THAT'S... A LOT.
YEAH.
I DON'T MEAN A LOT OF MONEY.
IT IS A LOT OF MONEY.
YEAH. BUT I JUST MEAN IT'S A LOT TO TAKE ON. DO YOU KNOW WHAT YOU'RE GOING TO DO WITH IT?
CH-CHNK
CH-CHNK
CH-CHNK
TUNNEL!
I'M GOING TO USE IT TO HELP.
OF COURSE YOU ARE.
I HAVE SOME IDEAS. I HAVE A MEETING IN GOTHAM TOMORROW.

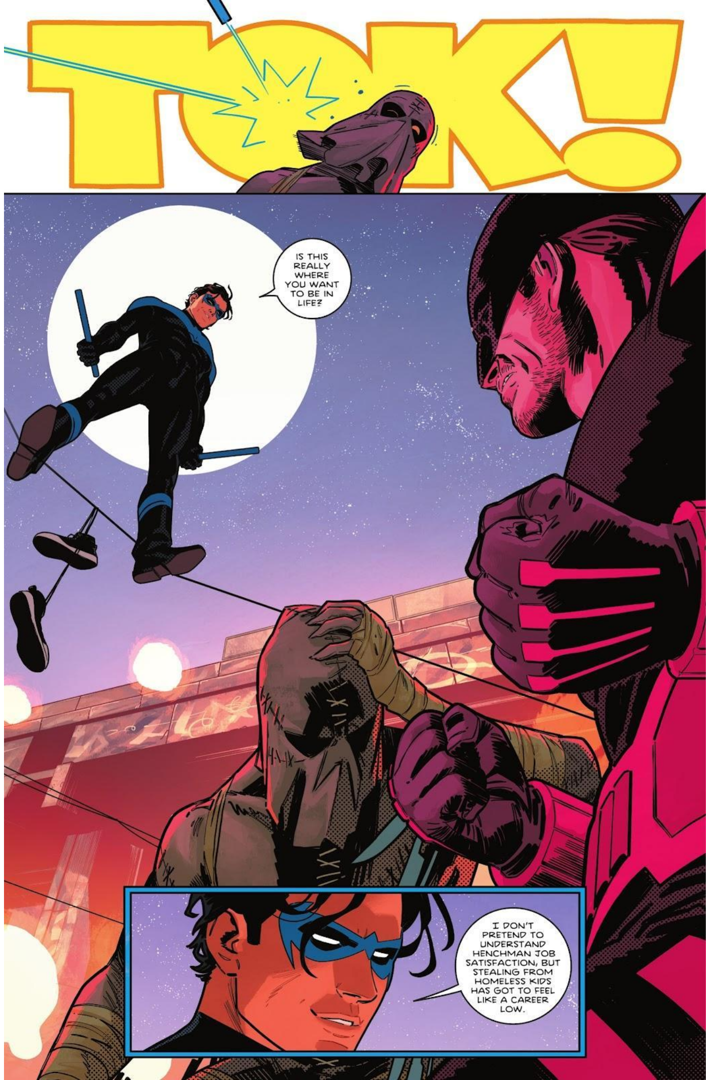

THERE'S A KID MISSING?
YEAH. ELLIOT. HIS FATHER WAS MURDERED.
DID YOU KNOW HIM?
NOT REALLY.
I MET HIM LAST NIGHT. I GOT HIM AND HIS SON A MEAL. BOOKED THEM A ROOM TO GET THEM OFF THE STREET. HE SEEMED KIND.
I'M SORRY.
WE'RE GETTING OFF HERE.
FROM THE CRIME SCENE, I TRACKED THE SON BACK TO A PIZZA SHOP.
SECURITY FOOTAGE AT THE STORE SHOWED HIM LEAVING WITH SOME OTHER KIDS. I'M PRETTY SURE I KNOW WHERE THEY ARE.
THERE'S A TENT CITY OF HOMELESS KIDS.
THIS IS THE REASON I ASKED YOU TO COME. BUT I DON'T NEED ROBIN. I NEED *TIM DRAKE.*
AND YOU WON'T BE ALONE.


YOU GOT A *PUPPY?*
DICK SAID SHE WAS GOING TO THE POUND.
HA! SURE. THAT SOUNDS PLAUSIBLE.
AND YOU WANT ME TO TAKE THE DOG *WITH* ME ON THIS MISSION?
YES.
WHY?
PEOPLE ARE MORE APPROACHABLE WITH A LOVABLE DOG.
IT'S TRUE. THAT'S JUST SCIENCE.
ALSO, SHE NEEDS A WALK.


KEEP A LOOK-OUT FOR ELLIOT, TIM.
AND FIND WHATEVER YOU CAN ABOUT THIS MAN WITHOUT A HEART.
SURE.
SO... UH...BABS STAYED THE NIGHT, HUH?
I SLEPT ON THE COUCH.
I SEE.
YOU KNOW I'M ON THIS CHANNEL, RIGHT?
WELL, I DO NOW.
CAN WE TALK ABOUT SOMETHING ELSE?
LIKE THE POTENTIAL SERIAL KILLER CUTTING OUT PEOPLE'S HEARTS?
YEAH. A MUCH MORE COMFORTABLE CONVERSATION.
HEY. I MIGHT HAVE ELLIOT.
DO YOU WANT ME TO ENGAGE? OR ARE YOU JUST HAPPY TO HAVE EYES ON HIM?
WE NEED TO KNOW WHAT HE SAW. AND I'D LIKE TO GET HIM SOME HELP.
GOT IT. GOING RADIO SILENT SO I DON'T LOOK LIKE I'M TALKING TO MYSELF.
GOOD CALL.


An hour later.
YOU'RE WELCOME ANYTIME. WE LOOK AFTER EACH OTHER HERE.
THANKS, ALEJANDRO.
DOGGO IS WELCOME, TOO.
ARF!
YOU SURE YOU'RE OKAY, ELLIOT?
YEAH. I'M GOOD.
OKAY. WE MIGHT SEE YOU TOMORROW FOR TACO NIGHT.
OKAY. ELLIOT DOESN'T WANT TO LEAVE. HE FEELS SAFE HERE.
BUT HE SAYS HIS FATHER WAS KILLED BY A MAN WITHOUT A HEART. AND HE'S NOT THE ONLY ONE.
TOO MANY KIDS IN THERE HAVE THE SAME STORY.
TIM.
YOU MIGHT WANT TO GIVE THE DOG TO ELLIOT AND SUIT UP...


"...WE HAVE TROUBLE."
BRUTALE AND ELECTROCUTIONER. THEY WORK FOR BLOCKBUSTER.*
*CHECK OUT ROBIN TO SEE WHERE BRUTALE GOES AFTER THIS! --JESS
WHAT DO YOU WANT?
PEOPLE IN HERE HAVE BEEN STEALING. THAT'S A CRIME, KID.
AND? YOU DON'T LOOK LIKE POLICE.
VERY PERCEPTIVE.
A CUT OF EVERY CRIME IN THIS CITY GOES TO BLOCKBUSTER, NO MATTER HOW PATHETIC. WE BEND THE RULES FOR POOR HOMELESS KIDS AND BLOCKBUSTER COULD LOOK WEAK.
BLOCKBUSTER DOESN'T EVER LOOK WEAK--


TOK!
IS THIS REALLY WHERE YOU WANT TO BE IN LIFE?
I DON'T PRETEND TO UNDERSTAND HENCHMAN JOB SATISFACTION, BUT STEALING FROM HOMELESS KIDS HAS GOT TO FEEL LIKE A CAREER LOW.


FZZZZT
THD
ROBIN!
CATCH.






TELL BLOCKBUSTER THESE PEOPLE ARE UNDER MY PROTECTION.
ROBIN...
WHAT IS IT?
FIRE!


HELP!
I'LL GET THEM.
MAKE SURE EVERYONE ELSE GETS CLEAR, ROBIN!
ORACLE!
I'M WATCHING.
FIRE DEPARTMENT HAS ALREADY BEEN CONTACTED. BE CAREFUL.
HELP! PLEASE!
IT'S OKAY. YOU'RE GOING TO BE ALL RIGHT.


YOU SET A DAMN FIRE!
THIS WASN'T US, MAN.
CAN'T GET MONEY OUT OF DEAD PEOPLE.
NIGHTWING. SOMETHING'S OFF.
I CAN SMELL THE ACCELERANT FROM HERE. THE FIRE WAS DEFINITELY DELIBERATELY LIT.
BUT I DON'T THINK BLOCKBUSTER'S PEOPLE STARTED IT.
YEAH. I KNOW.
IT WAS HIM...


...HEARTLESS.
NEXT: HEARTLESS VS. NIGHTWING


Celebrate Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month with your favorite DC characters!
DC FESTIVAL OF HEROES
THE ASIAN SUPERHERO CELEBRATION
JIM LEE 2021
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DC
WRITTEN BY GENE LUEN YANG • RAM V • GREG PAK • ALYSSA WONG • MARIKO TAMAKI • MINH LÊ • AUDREY MOK • AND MORE
ART BY MARCUS TO • BERNARD CHANG • DUSTIN NGUYEN • MARCIO TAKARA • TRUNG LE NGUYEN • SEAN CHEN • AND MORE COVER BY JIM LEE
A 100-PAGE ANTHOLOGY | AVAILABLE IN MAY

DC NATION | SPOTLIGHT ON

MILESTONE RETURNS

Milestone is officially back at DC, with a reinvented Dakota Universe restoring groundbreaking heroes Static, Icon, Rocket, and Hardware to the forefront of pop culture where they belong. Here's your guide to what's next.

Just like in the original Milestone, these stories reflect contemporary, real-world issues. It all starts in this one-shot, opening with the formative event for Milestone's heroes: the Big Bang, a Black Lives Matter protest that unleashes a sudden wave of superpowers in the city of Dakota!

IN STORES IN MAY!

WRITTEN BY REGINALD HUDLIN AND MORE

ILLUSTRATED BY DENYS COWAN, NIKOLAS DRAPER-IVEY, CHRISCROSS, JIM LEE, AND MORE





WRITTEN BY VITA AYALA

ILLUSTRATED BY CHRISCROSS AND NIKOLAS DRAPER-IVEY

Virgil is gifted with incredible electromagnetic powers in the wake of the Big Bang—but when the bullies who terrorized him show up with powers of their own, can Static be the hero that Dakota needs?

IN STORES IN JUNE!

What happens when superheroes actually make a difference? Icon and Rocket's heroism has unexpected consequences when stopping the drug trade leads to a global shakeup, and the duo become the two most wanted people in the world!

IN STORES IN JULY!

WRITTEN BY REGINALD HUDLIN AND LEON CHILLS

ILLUSTRATED BY DOUG BRAITHWAITE





WRITTEN BY BRANDON THOMAS

ILLUSTRATED BY DENYS COWAN AND BILL SIENKIEWICZ

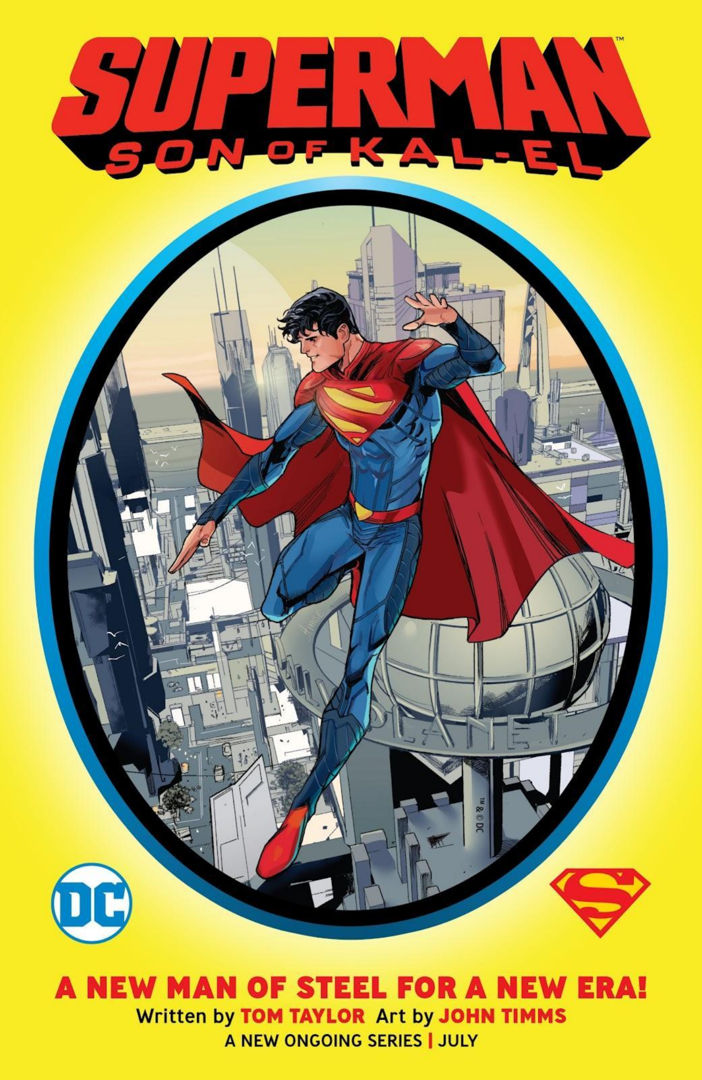
Alva Industries has made Curtis Metcalf the fall guy for the tragedy of the Big Bang. But Curtis is smart enough to not go out like that—and smart enough to steal his inventions back from Alva and start the process of remaking the world his way!

IN STORES IN JUNE!

DC COMICS MARIE JAVINS Editor-in-Chief, DC Comics DANIEL CHERRY III Senior VP – General Manager JIM LEE Publisher & Chief Creative Officer JOEN CHOE VP – Global Brand & Creative Services DON FALLETTI VP – Manufacturing Operations & Workflow Management LAWRENCE GANEM VP – Talent Services ALISON GILL Senior VP – Manufacturing & Operations NICK J. NAPOLITANO VP – Manufacturing Administration & Design NANCY SPEARS VP – Revenue



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SUPERMAN
SON OF KAL-EL
A NEW MAN OF STEEL FOR A NEW ERA!
Written by TOM TAYLOR Art by JOHN TIMMS
A NEW ONGOING SERIES | JULY


Blüdhaven City Hall.
I, MELINDA ZUCCO...
...DO SOLEMNLY SWEAR TO FAITHFULLY AND IMPARTIALLY SUPPORT THE CONSTITUTION.
AND TO SERVE THE CITIZENS AND UPHOLD THE LAWS OF THE CITY OF BLÜDHAVEN.
CONGRATULATIONS, MADAM MAYOR.
THANK YOU. IT'S A GREAT HONOR.
NOW, IF YOU'LL FOLLOW ME.
WHAT'S THIS, COMMISSIONER MACLEAN?
WE JUST HAVE ANOTHER FORMALITY TO ATTEND TO.
LADIES AND GENTLEMEN...


CLAP CLAP
...PRESENTING MAYOR ZUCCO!
CLAP CLAP
CLAP CLAP
CLAP CLAP
CLAP CLAP
I HOPE YOU HAD YOUR FINGERS CROSSED THROUGH THAT WHOLE CEREMONY. CHAMPAGNE?
THANK YOU MR. MARONI.
SUITCASE FULL OF MONEY?
UM...
I DON'T REALLY USE CASH.
COULD YOU JUST PUT IT INTO AN ACCOUNT?
IT LACKS A CERTAIN CEREMONY.
WE CAN DO THAT, MELINDA.
TAKE A SEAT. TELL US YOUR PLAN FOR MY CITY.
MY PLAN, BLOCKBUSTER, IS TO MAKE US ALL MUCH WEALTHIER AND TO EXTEND YOUR POWER BEYOND THE CITY.
BUT TO DO SO IN A WAY THAT BUILDS ON THE GOOD WORK YOU'VE ALREADY DONE...


"...I HAVE NO INTEREST IN BURNING ANYTHING DOWN."
STAY BEHIND ME.
NIGHTWING
LEAPING INTO THE LIGHT PART 4
TOM TAYLOR writer BRUNO REDONDO artist
ADRIANO LUCAS colors WES ABBOTT letters
BRUNO REDONDO cover RAPHAEL GRASSETTI variant cover
TRAVIS MOORE & ALEJANDRO SÁNCHEZ DC pride variant cover
BEN MEARES assistant editor JESSICA CHEN editor
BEN ABERNATHY group editor
Nightwing created by MARV WOLFMAN & GEORGE PÉREZ
The "Progress" Pride flag in the DC Logo designed by DANIEL QUASAR
NIGHTWING. WHAT'S HAPPENING?
HE'S HERE, ORACLE.
IT'S HEARTLESS.
HIS CLOTHES ARE COVERED IN INFRARED LIGHTS. THEY'RE BLINDING YOUR CAMERA. I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU'RE UP AGAINST.
HOLD ON TO ME, KIDS. I'M GOING TO GET YOU OUT OF--
CLK


PSSSHHH
OFF YOU GO, KIDS.
WHAT ARE YOU DOING?
I DON'T WANT TO WATCH THEM DIE. I JUST WANT TO WATCH THEM RUN.
I'VE HEARD OF YOU.
I WAS HOPING WE'D MEET.
NIGHTWING. BLÜDHAVEN'S GUARDIAN ANGEL.
CLK
YOU MUST HAVE QUITE THE HEART.


SHNK
THP
I'VE UNDERESTIMATED HIM.
THD


BWOK
WHAT HAPPENED?
I'M SEEING A CONCERNING NUMBER OF SPOTS FOR A GUY WHO SHOULD AVOID MORE HEAD INJURIES.
HE'S ENHANCED.
CRNCH
HE'S FAST.
HE'S STRONG.
BUT THAT'S ALL.
HIS TECHNIQUE IS TERRIBLE.
HE HAS THE UPGRADES, BUT HE HASN'T DONE THE WORK.
LIKE HE'S TRIED TO TAKE A SHORTCUT TO SUPER-VILLAINY.
DO YOU ALWAYS NARRATE YOUR FIGHTS?
JUST THE BORING ONES.
JUST HAVE TO STAY OUT OF HIS REACH AND EMPLOY COUNTER-SUPERHUMAN TECHNIQUES.
USE HIS MOMENTUM AND FORCE AGAINST HIM.
DOESN'T MATTER HOW STRONG HE IS.
HURK!
HE STILL HAS TO BREATHE.
HRAARGH!
I CAN STILL MAKE HIM ANGRY.
I CAN DEFINITELY WORK WITH THAT.


OH, YOU ABSOLUTE @#$%.
YOU KNOW WHAT? THIS CAN WAIT. I'LL KILL YOU LATER.
WHAT? IS THIS AN INCONVENIENT TIME?
YOU THINK I'M LETTING YOU WALK AWAY?
OF COURSE YOU'LL LET ME WALK AWAY. BECAUSE I KNOW YOUR PATHETIC WEAKNESS.
YOU *CARE.*
AND THE KIDS HAVE ALL BEEN RUNNING TOWARDS THE PIER.
WHICH IS WHERE I WANT THEM.

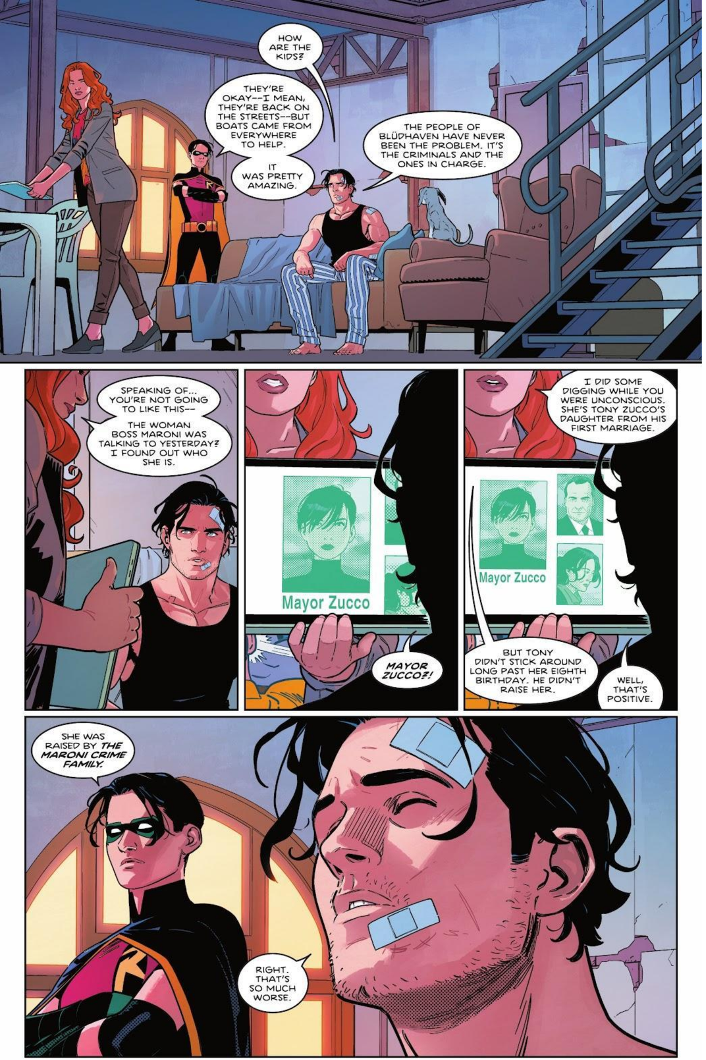

I WANTED TO SEE THEIR FEAR. I WANTED TO SEE THEIR FACES.
BUT IT'S OKAY. I HAVE A PRETTY VIVID IMAGINATION.
ROBIN!
WHAT IS IT?
GET THE KIDS OFF THE PIER! GET THEM--
-CLK-

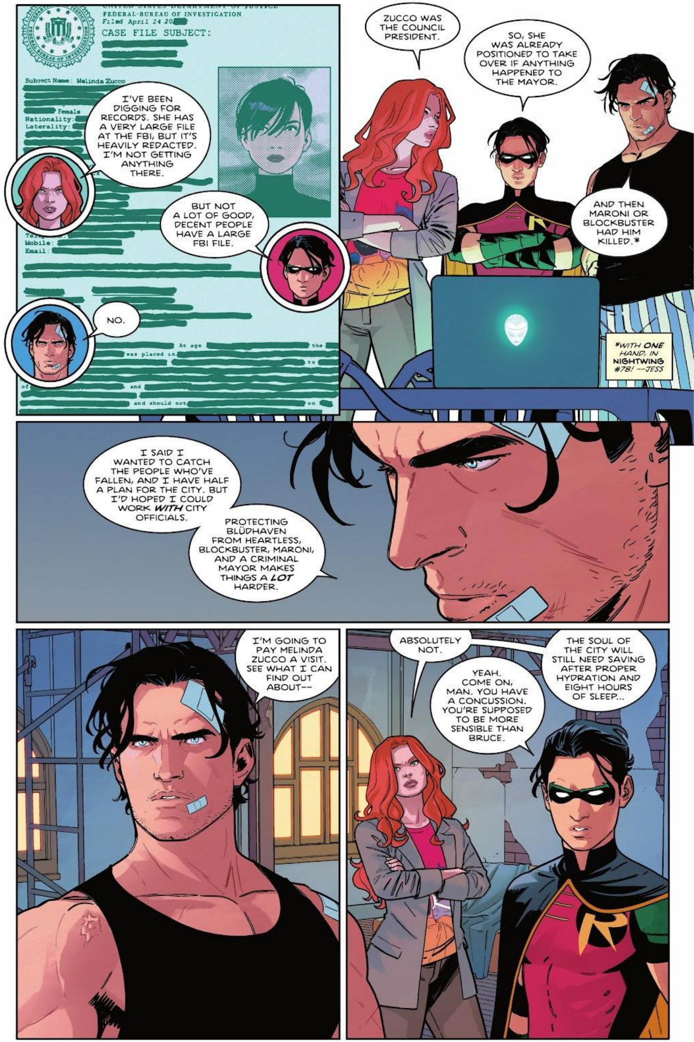

WOOOOM
MOVE BACK. MOVE BACK!
ARF! ARF! ARF!
I CAN'T SWIM.
NIGHTWING. ORACLE. WE'RE STANDING ON A BURNING PIER AND I NEED A BETTER OPTION THAN FORCING A BUNCH OF KIDS INTO THE SEA.
ANY IDEAS?


WE ASK FOR HELP.
ORACLE. MARITIME DISTRESS CHANNEL. VHF RADIO 16.
COPY. YOU'RE PATCHED INTO THE FREQUENCY.
ARE WE SERIOUSLY RELYING ON THE KINDNESS OF STRANGERS...OF BLÜDHAVEN?
MAYDAY. MAYDAY. THERE ARE HUNDREDS OF CHILDREN IN NEED OF RESCUE AT THE END OF BLÜDHAVEN PIER 12.
HSSSSS--
COME ON, BLÜDHAVEN.
I REPEAT. MAYDAY. MAYDAY. THERE ARE HUNDREDS OF KIDS IN DANGER AT THE END OF BLÜDHAVEN PIER 12.
WE NEED EVERYTHING THAT CAN FLOAT IN THE AREA!
SHOW THEM WHY YOU'RE WORTH FIGHTING FOR.
HSSSSS--
PLEASE...
DICK...?
THIS IS THE DEVIN...


...ROGER YOUR MAYDAY. E.T.A. THREE MINUTES. OUT.
THIS IS THE SEELEY. ROGER YOUR MAYDAY. WE'RE ON OUR WAY. OUT.
THIS IS THE LEONARDI. WE HEAR YOU.
THE JURGENS HERE.
NIGHTWING. THEY'RE COMING. THEY'RE ALL COMING!
ROGER YOUR MAYDAY. THE CONSTANT INBOUND.
FERNANDEZ ON THE WAY.
NOT EVERYTHING IN THIS CITY IS BROKEN.
ORACLE. ALERT LOCAL HOSPITALS AND...
...AND...
NIGHTWING?
NIGHTWING!


DICK?
CAN YOU HEAR ME?
HUH...WHAT HAPPENED?
YOU LOST CONSCIOUSNESS.
WHY?
YOU'RE STILL RECOVERING FROM BEING SHOT IN THE BRAIN AND YOU WERE PUNCHED IN THE HEAD BY AN ENHANCED SUPER-VILLAIN.
OH, YEAH. THAT'D DO IT.
BITEWING WAS PRETTY WORRIED ABOUT YOU.
ARF!
WAG WAG
BITEWING? THAT'S...
...ACTUALLY A GREAT NAME.
BUT HER NAME IS HALEY.
YOU'RE TELLING THE PEOPLE IN THIS ROOM WE CAN'T HAVE TWO NAMES?
I HAVE THREE.

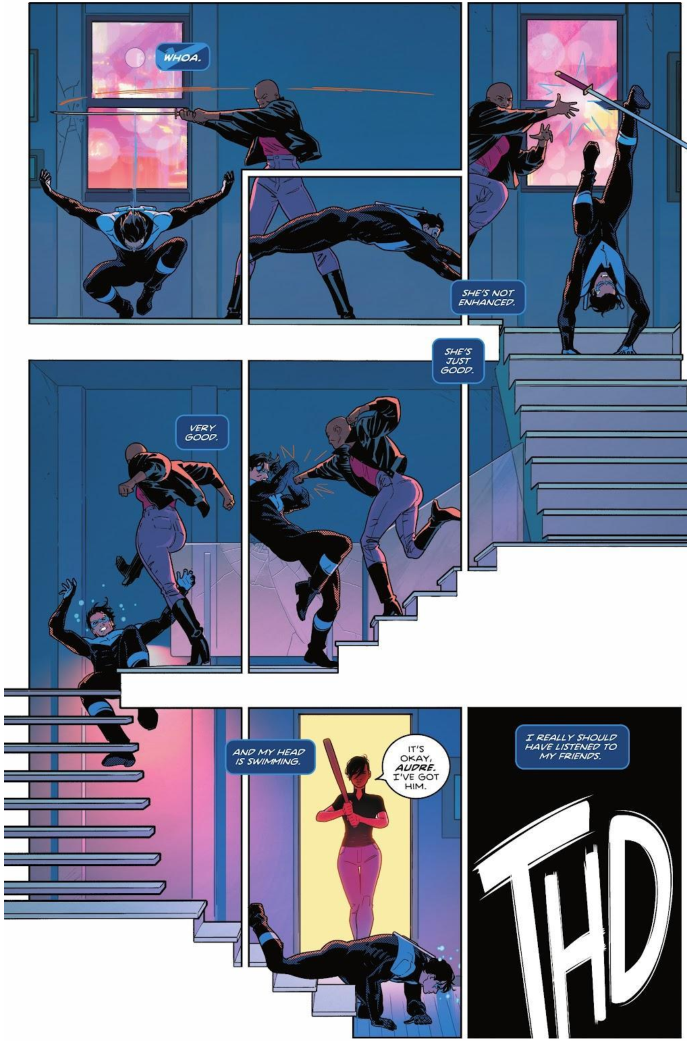

HOW ARE THE KIDS?
THEY'RE OKAY--I MEAN, THEY'RE BACK ON THE STREETS--BUT BOATS CAME FROM EVERYWHERE TO HELP.
IT WAS PRETTY AMAZING.
THE PEOPLE OF BLÜDHAVEN HAVE NEVER BEEN THE PROBLEM. IT'S THE CRIMINALS AND THE ONES IN CHARGE.
SPEAKING OF... YOU'RE NOT GOING TO LIKE THIS--
THE WOMAN BOSS MARONI WAS TALKING TO YESTERDAY? I FOUND OUT WHO SHE IS.
Mayor Zucco
MAYOR ZUCCO?!
I DID SOME DIGGING WHILE YOU WERE UNCONSCIOUS. SHE'S TONY ZUCCO'S DAUGHTER FROM HIS FIRST MARRIAGE.
Mayor Zucco
BUT TONY DIDN'T STICK AROUND LONG PAST HER EIGHTH BIRTHDAY. HE DIDN'T RAISE HER.
WELL, THAT'S POSITIVE.
SHE WAS RAISED BY THE MARONI CRIME FAMILY.
RIGHT. THAT'S SO MUCH WORSE.

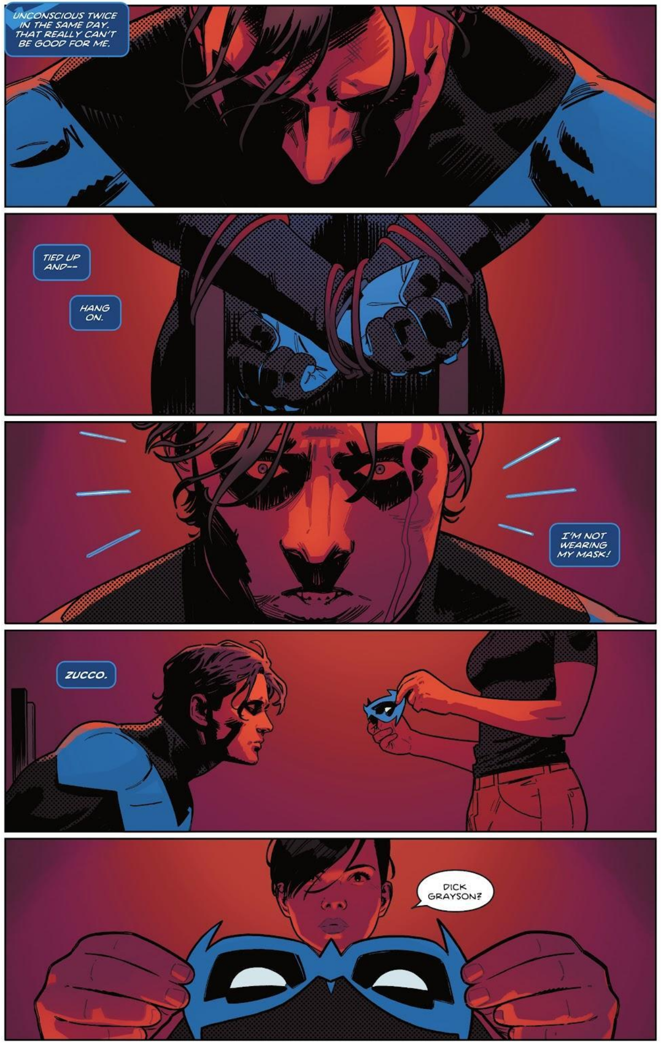

FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION
CASE FILE SUBJECT:
Subject Name: Melinda Zucco
I'VE BEEN DIGGING FOR RECORDS. SHE HAS A VERY LARGE FILE AT THE FBI, BUT IT'S HEAVILY REDACTED. I'M NOT GETTING ANYTHING THERE.
BUT NOT A LOT OF GOOD, DECENT PEOPLE HAVE A LARGE FBI FILE.
NO.
ZUCCO WAS THE COUNCIL PRESIDENT.
SO, SHE WAS ALREADY POSITIONED TO TAKE OVER IF ANYTHING HAPPENED TO THE MAYOR.
AND THEN MARONI OR BLOCKBUSTER HAD HIM KILLED.*
*WITH ONE HAND, IN NIGHTWING #78! --JESS
I SAID I WANTED TO CATCH THE PEOPLE WHO'VE FALLEN, AND I HAVE HALF A PLAN FOR THE CITY. BUT I'D HOPED I COULD WORK WITH CITY OFFICIALS.
PROTECTING BLÜDHAVEN FROM HEARTLESS, BLOCKBUSTER, MARONI, AND A CRIMINAL MAYOR MAKES THINGS A LOT HARDER.
I'M GOING TO PAY MELINDA ZUCCO A VISIT. SEE WHAT I CAN FIND OUT ABOUT--
ABSOLUTELY NOT.
THE SOUL OF THE CITY WILL STILL NEED SAVING AFTER PROPER HYDRATION AND EIGHT HOURS OF SLEEP...
YEAH. COME ON, MAN. YOU HAVE A CONCUSSION. YOU'RE SUPPOSED TO BE MORE SENSIBLE THAN BRUCE.


"...YOU NEED REST."
MAYOR ZUCCO.
THE CRIMINAL DAUGHTER OF THE MAN WHO KILLED MY PARENTS IS THE MAYOR OF MY CITY.
THERE'S NO WAY I'M SLEEPING.
HOT


DICK, YOU THERE?
YEP.
WHAT ARE YOU DOING?
RESTING.
YOU KNOW YOU'RE STILL WEARING MY CAMERA?
I... MAY HAVE FORGOTTEN THAT.
THAT WOULD BE THE HEAD INJURY.
QUITE POSSIBLY.
CONCUSSION. WHICH CALLS FOR SLEEP, HYDRATION, AND NO PHYSICAL ACTIVITY OF ANY KIND.
IT'S OKAY. I'M JUST CHECKING OUT ZUCCO'S PLACE. I'M GOING TO BE QUIET...

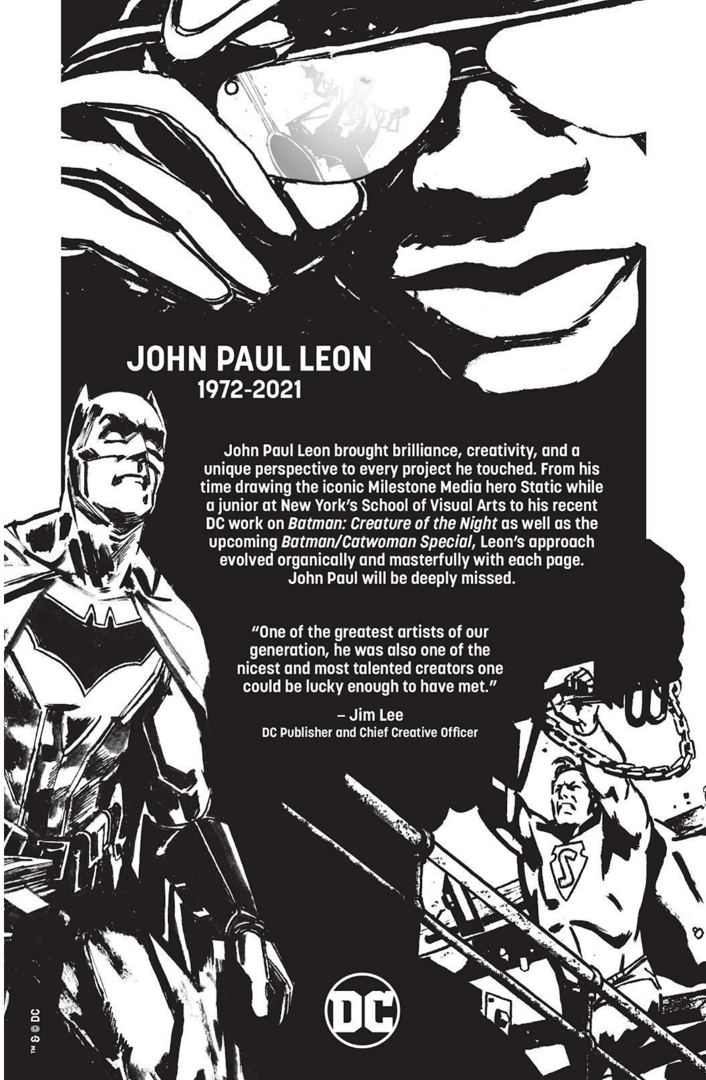

...I'M NOT PLANNING ON ANY PHYSICAL ACTIVITY.
ON YOUR LEFT!


WHOA.
SHE'S NOT ENHANCED.
SHE'S JUST GOOD.
VERY GOOD.
AND MY HEAD IS SWIMMING.
IT'S OKAY, AUDRE. I'VE GOT HIM.
I REALLY SHOULD HAVE LISTENED TO MY FRIENDS.
THD

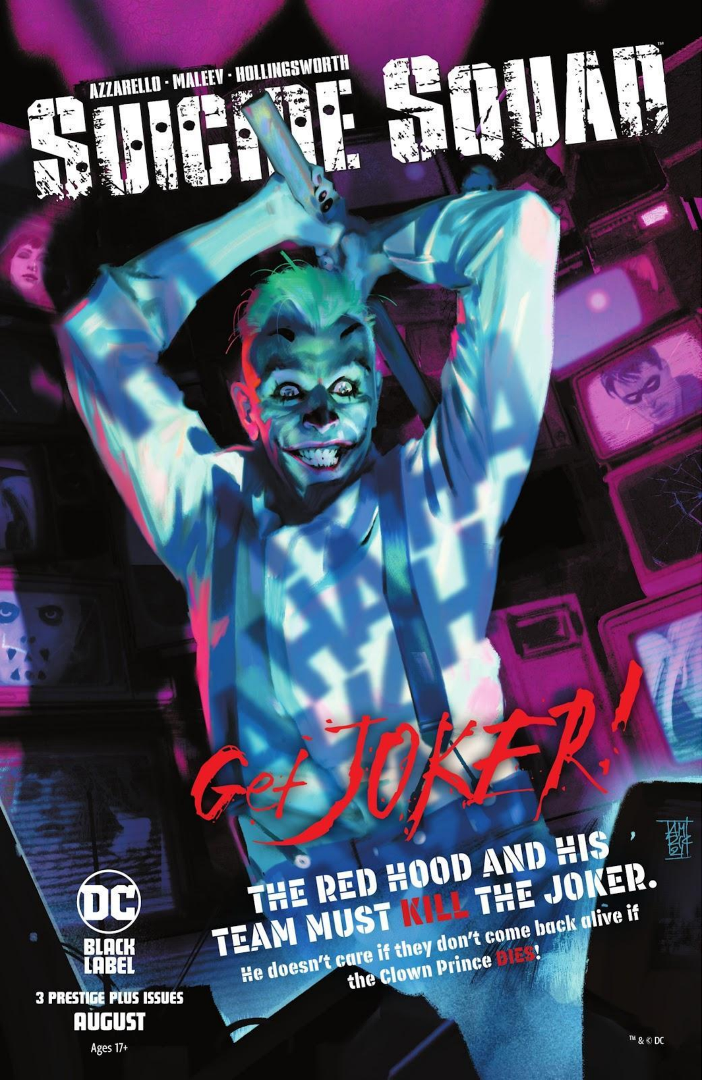

UNCONSCIOUS TWICE IN THE SAME DAY. THAT REALLY CAN'T BE GOOD FOR ME.
TIED UP AND--
HANG ON.
I'M NOT WEARING MY MASK!
ZUCCO.
DICK GRAYSON?

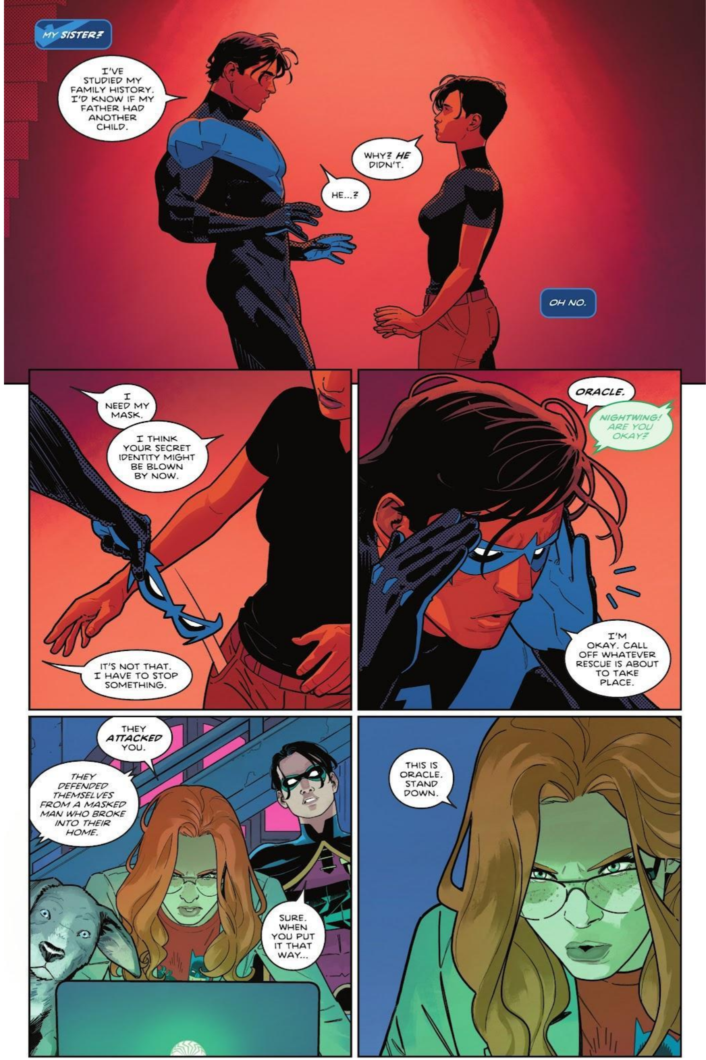

YOU KNOW ME?
I KNOW YOU, TOO!
YOU WORKED FOR THE MARONI CRIME FAMILY.
YOU'RE THE DAUGHTER OF TONY ZUCCO.
NO. I'M NOT.
I THOUGHT I WAS, FOR A LONG TIME.
BUT I LEARNED THE TRUTH...


MY REAL FATHER WAS NAMED JOHN GRAYSON.
I'M YOUR SISTER.
NEXT: THE GRAYSONS


JOHN PAUL LEON
1972-2021
John Paul Leon brought brilliance, creativity, and a unique perspective to every project he touched. From his time drawing the iconic Milestone Media hero Static while a junior at New York's School of Visual Arts to his recent DC work on Batman: Creature of the Night as well as the upcoming Batman/Catwoman Special, Leon's approach evolved organically and masterfully with each page. John Paul will be deeply missed.
"One of the greatest artists of our generation, he was also one of the nicest and most talented creators one could be lucky enough to have met."
– Jim Lee
DC Publisher and Chief Creative Officer
DC


DC
82
NIGHTWING
TAYLOR
REDONDO
LUCAS
THE MYSTERY OF
MELINDA ZUCCO
AGES 13+
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THE RED HOOD AND HIS TEAM MUST KILL THE JOKER.
He doesn't care if they don't come back alive if the Clown Prince DIES!
DC BLACK LABEL
3 PRESTIGE PLUS ISSUES
AUGUST
Ages 17+
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MY SISTER?
I'VE STUDIED MY FAMILY HISTORY. I'D KNOW IF MY FATHER HAD ANOTHER CHILD.
WHY? HE DIDN'T.
HE...?
OH NO.
I NEED MY MASK.
I THINK YOUR SECRET IDENTITY MIGHT BE BLOWN BY NOW.
IT'S NOT THAT. I HAVE TO STOP SOMETHING.
ORACLE.
NIGHTWING! ARE YOU OKAY?
I'M OKAY. CALL OFF WHATEVER RESCUE IS ABOUT TO TAKE PLACE.
THEY ATTACKED YOU.
THEY DEFENDED THEMSELVES FROM A MASKED MAN WHO BROKE INTO THEIR HOME.
SURE. WHEN YOU PUT IT THAT WAY...
THIS IS ORACLE. STAND DOWN.


BIG BIRD EXTRACTION PROTOCOL IS CANCELED.
REALLY? I'M NEARLY THERE.
HE'S ALL RIGHT, DONNA.
ARE YOU SURE?
I'M SURE, STARFIRE.
THANKS, EVERYONE.
...DICK'S OKAY.


ALL RIGHT. WE'RE GOOD.
WHAT WAS THAT?
I'M GUESSING YOU ALMOST HAD A BUILDING FULL OF VERY PROTECTIVE SUPERHEROES.
DON'T TRUST HER. KEEP THIS CHANNEL OPEN.
I WILL.
NOW, WE SHOULD TALK.
NO. I THINK ALL OF THIS WOULD BE BETTER COMING FROM SOMEONE ELSE.
SHE'S JUST UPSTAIRS.
BUT LET'S GET YOU CHANGED FIRST. UNLESS YOU'RE HAPPY TO SHARE YOUR SECRET IDENTITY WITH MORE PEOPLE TODAY.
WHO AM I MEETING?



MY MOTHER.
NIGHTWING
LEAPING INTO THE LIGHT PART 5
TOM TAYLOR writer
BRUNO REDONDO, RICK LEONARDI & NEIL EDWARDS pencils
BRUNO REDONDO, ANDY LANNING & SCOTT HANNA inks
ADRIANO LUCAS colors
WES ABBOTT letters
BRUNO REDONDO cover
JAMAL CAMPBELL variant cover
BEN MEARES assistant editor
JESSICA CHEN editor
BEN ABERNATHY group editor
Nightwing created by MARV WOLFMAN & GEORGE PÉREZ
MY GOD. IT'S LIKE LOOKING BACK IN TIME.
YOU LOOK SO MUCH LIKE JOHN.
YOU HAVE THE SAME KINDNESS IN YOUR EYES.
AND THERE'S MARY. SHINING IN THAT BEAUTIFUL ROMANI SMILE.
WHAT HAVE YOU TOLD HIM, MELINDA?
ONLY WHO I AM TO HIM. I THOUGHT THE REST WOULD BE BEST COMING FROM YOU.
OF COURSE.
DICK GRAYSON, MY NAME IS MEILI LIN.
PLEASE SIT.



"I WAS TWENTY-THREE YEARS OLD AND PAID FOR WHEN I CAME TO THIS COUNTRY.
"TONY ZUCCO WAS VIOLENT AND POSSESSIVE.
"BUT I HAD NO INTEREST IN BEING POSSESSED.
"ONE NIGHT, HE TOOK ME TO A CIRCUS.
"I SAW AN OPPORTUNITY.
"AND I TOOK IT."
HEY!


MEILI!
MEILI!
I'M SORRY, SIR. CAN I HELP YOU?
I KNOW SHE RAN THIS WAY.
I DON'T KNOW WHO YOU'RE--
YOU LYING TO ME, KID?
WHOA.
WHERE IS SHE?
JOHN?
IT'S OKAY, MARY. THIS GUY ISN'T GOING TO HURT ANYONE.


BANG
CRNCH
JOHN! DOWN!
THUD


GONNA END YOU, BOUNCING FREAKS!
THE GUN!
CRK
GOT IT!
WE'VE STOPPED BOUNCING.
YOU ENDED US YET?
THAT'S ENOUGH OF THAT.


CAN'T HAVE OUR STAR ATTRACTIONS HURT THEMSELVES BEATING YOU UP, LITTLE MAN.
PUT HIM DOWN, IVAN.
MY CIRCUS IS CLOSING FOR THE NIGHT, SIR. WHAT DO YOU WANT?
I'M LOOKING FOR MY WIFE.
SHE *RAN AWAY* FROM YOU? BUT YOU SEEM LIKE *SUCH* A CATCH.
RIGHT? WHO COULD RESIST THE COMBINATION OF *RAGE* AND *GUN VIOLENCE?*
JOHN. MARY. LET'S NOT AGGRAVATE THE SITUATION.
THIS SITUATION CAME PRE-AGGRAVATED, *MR. HALY.*


HAVE EITHER OF YOU SEEN THIS MAN'S WIFE?
NO.
NOPE.
THEN THAT'S PROBABLY THE END OF IT. I'M GOING TO ASK YOU TO LEAVE, SIR.
WAIT!
I'D HATE TO SEE YOU LEAVE WITHOUT A PRIZE.
PLEASE ACCEPT THIS OVERSIZED FLUFFY BEAR AND ALL THE CONDESCENSION THAT GOES WITH IT.
IS SHE IN YOUR TRAILER?
OF COURSE.
GOOD MAN. LOOK AFTER HER.
IT'S ALL RIGHT. HE'S GONE...


...YOU CAN COME OUT NOW.
THANK YOU.
YOU RISKED YOUR LIFE FOR A STRANGER?
IT'S NO BIG DEAL. I RISK MY LIFE FOR STRANGERS MOST DAYS.
AND TWICE ON SATURDAYS.
I'M JOHN.
MEILI.
DO YOU HAVE ANYWHERE YOU CAN GO, MEILI?
I HADN'T REALLY THOUGHT THAT FAR AHEAD.
THAT'S OKAY.
WE CAN ALWAYS USE MORE PEOPLE WITH NOWHERE ELSE TO GO.


"SO I RAN AWAY FROM THAT ABUSIVE @#$% AND JOINED THE CIRCUS.
"IT WAS THE HAPPIEST TIME OF MY LIFE.
"JOHN AND MARY WERE BOTH SO KIND TO ME.
"YOUR PARENTS SAVED ME, THEN THEY PROTECTED ME.
"THEY SHOWED ME WHAT LIFE WAS SUPPOSED TO BE.
"PLEASE UNDERSTAND, THEY WEREN'T TOGETHER YET.
"BUT IT WAS ONLY BECAUSE JOHN HAD PUT MARY ON SUCH A HIGH PEDESTAL...
"...THAT HE WAS OBLIVIOUS SHE'D PUT HIM ON ONE TOO.
"IT WOULD BE A WHILE TILL THEY STOOD ON THE HIGHEST PEDESTALS TOGETHER.
"JOHN AND I WEREN'T INVOLVED LONG.
"JUST LONG ENOUGH."


"TONY FOUND ME WHEN HALY'S CIRCUS WAS TOURING IN STAR CITY.
"AND HE USED ALL HIS 'CHARM' TO WIN ME BACK."
GET THE HELL OFF ME!
WHAT'S WITH THE BEAR, BOSS?
JUST GET HER OUT OF HERE. I'LL MEET YOU AT THE CAR.


MEILI?
WHAT'S...
THD
CAN'T HURT THE STAR ATTRACTIONS.
BUT THEN, I'D HATE TO LEAVE WITHOUT GIVING YOU A PRIZE.
CRNCH
NAAGHHHH!


"I HEARD JOHN LOOKED FOR ME. BUT TONY TOOK ME FAR FROM STAR CITY TO BLÜDHAVEN.
"AND SIX MONTHS LATER, MELINDA WAS BORN.
"TONY'S EGO WOULDN'T ALLOW HIM TO VOICE WHAT HE SUSPECTED.
"BUT HE ALWAYS KNEW THE TRUTH.
"AND HE GOT ANGRIER.
"THE NEXT TIME I ESCAPED, YEARS LATER, HE DIDN'T TRY TO STOP ME. HE'D ALREADY MOVED ON.
"I BROUGHT MELINDA TO THE CIRCUS TO SEE JOHN..."


"...BUT I FOUND *YOU*, DICK."
I'M SCARED, DAD.
THAT'S NORMAL.
THERE'S GOING TO BE A MOMENT WHERE YOU MIGHT NOT THINK YOU CAN MAKE IT.
BUT KEEP STRETCHING. KEEP YOUR EYES LOCKED ON WHERE YOU'RE GOING.
IF YOU CAN SEE IT, DICK, YOU CAN REACH IT.
NOW. *FLY.*
LET GO!


THP
WOULD YOU LOOK AT THAT...
...ANOTHER *FLYING GRAYSON.*
"YOU ALL LOOKED SO *HAPPY.*
"AFTER EVERYTHING THEY'D DONE FOR ME. THEY DIDN'T DESERVE...
"I LEFT."


SEE? YOU *WERE* READY.
I DID IT!
YOU SURE DID, KIDDO. NOW COMES THE EASY BIT.
YOU HAVE TO LEARN HOW TO FALL.
BUT IT'S OKAY...
...WE'LL ALL FALL *TOGETHER.*
"I ALWAYS PLANNED TO COME BACK ONE DAY. BUT BEFORE I FOUND THE COURAGE..."


"...TONY KILLED THEM."


ZUCCO KNEW THEM.
HE TARGETED THEM.
I'M SO SORRY FOR WHAT HAPPENED. FOR WHAT THAT COWARDLY, ABUSIVE @#$% DID TO THEM...
...AND TO YOU.
I'M SORRY FOR WHAT HE DID TO BOTH OF US.
HAVE YOU HAD A GOOD LIFE? ARE YOU LOVED?
I HAVE. I AM.
THAT'S GOOD.
AND I'M SO GLAD YOU AND MELINDA FINALLY HAD A CHANCE TO MEET.
I'M VERY PROUD OF HER. SHE'S JUST BEEN MADE MAYOR, YOU KNOW?
I KNOW.
IT WAS WONDERFUL TO MEET YOU, MS. LIN.
AND I'M SO SORRY YOUR DAUGHTER IS A CRIMINAL.

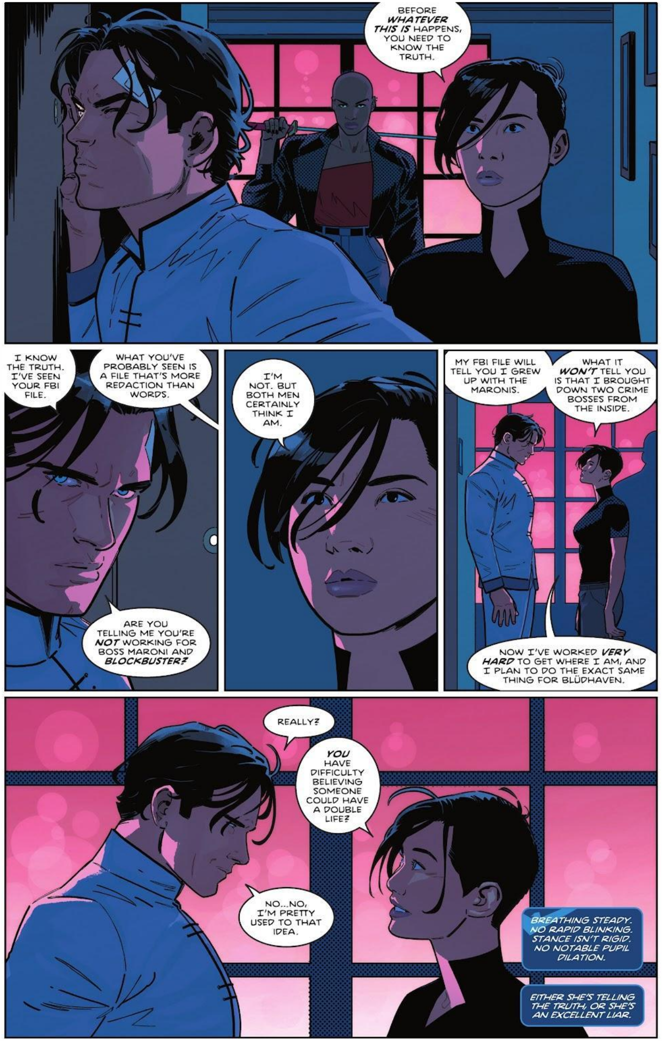

SHE DOESN'T KNOW THE TRUTH ABOUT YOU, DOES SHE? SHE DOESN'T KNOW WHAT YOU REALLY ARE.
THMP
?
YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT I AM.
MELINDA! WE HAVE A WHOLE LOT OF TROUBLE.
AUDRE! WHAT'S HAPPENING?!
"IT'S HIM!
POLICE
"IT'S BLOCKBUSTER."
NEXT: NIGHTWING vs. BLOCKBUSTER!


DEPARTMENT OF EXTRANORMAL OPERATIONS
D.E.O.
Department of Extranormal Operations
Director Bones
MULTIVERSAL MYSTERIES TO BE SOLVED
1. Is the United Planets forming their own Justice League?
2. What sacrifice must Shazam! make?
3. Why have the Green Lanterns' rings gone dark?
4. What is the new Swamp Thing's mission?
5. Who will protect the Oceans?
6. Why has Red X infiltrated Teen Titans Academy?


-MULTIVERSAL MONITORS-
-EARTHS IN JEOPARDY-
DEPARTMENT OF
D.E.O.


NIGHTWING
83
TAYLOR
REDONDO
LUCAS
MY NAME IS DICK GRAYSON, AND I HAVE AN IDEA.
AGES 13+
DCCOMICS.COM


THIS IS THE BLUDHAVEN POLICE!
COME OUT WITH YOUR HANDS ON YOUR HEAD!
TWO MINUTES, COMMISIONER MACLEAN...
...THEN I'M GOING IN.


BEFORE WHATEVER THIS IS HAPPENS, YOU NEED TO KNOW THE TRUTH.
I KNOW THE TRUTH. I'VE SEEN YOUR FBI FILE.
WHAT YOU'VE PROBABLY SEEN IS A FILE THAT'S MORE REDACTION THAN WORDS.
ARE YOU TELLING ME YOU'RE NOT WORKING FOR BOSS MARONI AND BLOCKBUSTER?
I'M NOT. BUT BOTH MEN CERTAINLY THINK I AM.
MY FBI FILE WILL TELL YOU I GREW UP WITH THE MARONIS.
WHAT IT WON'T TELL YOU IS THAT I BROUGHT DOWN TWO CRIME BOSSES FROM THE INSIDE.
NOW I'VE WORKED VERY HARD TO GET WHERE I AM, AND I PLAN TO DO THE EXACT SAME THING FOR BLÜDHAVEN.
REALLY?
YOU HAVE DIFFICULTY BELIEVING SOMEONE COULD HAVE A DOUBLE LIFE?
NO...NO, I'M PRETTY USED TO THAT IDEA.
BREATHING STEADY. NO RAPID BLINKING. STANCE ISN'T RIGID. NO NOTABLE PUPIL DILATION.
EITHER SHE'S TELLING THE TRUTH, OR SHE'S AN EXCELLENT LIAR.


DICK GRAYSON. I'VE THOUGHT ABOUT WHAT KIND OF PERSON YOU MIGHT BE FOR YEARS.
AND NOW I FIND MY BROTHER IS BLÜDHAVEN'S GUARDIAN SUPER-HERO.
WE CAN HELP EACH OTHER. WE CAN BRING THESE PEOPLE DOWN.
ACTUALLY, WE CAN DO EVEN MORE THAN THAT, MELINDA.
I'M ABOUT TO DO SOMETHING, AND...AND I WANT TO TELL YOU. I WANT TO BELIEVE YOU, BUT...
NIGHTWING! WE KNOW YOU'RE IN THERE!
THEY'RE HERE FOR ME. THEY MUST HAVE HAD EYES ON YOUR HOME. THEY THINK I BROKE IN.
YOU DID BREAK IN.
OH, YEAH. I SUPPOSE I DID.
BUT RIGHT NOW, THEY THINK A DANGEROUS VIGILANTE HAS BROKEN INTO THE MAYOR'S HOME...



CRK
"...WE CAN WORK WITH THAT."
ROLAND?
DID HE GET ANYTHING FROM YOU?
NOTHING. YOU HAD PEOPLE WATCHING MY HOME?
OF COURSE. I PROTECT ALL MY ASSETS.
WHERE IS HE?
HE WENT OUT THE WINDOW!
BLOCKBUSTER, WE HAVE EYES ON HIM...
CSSSS
SSHH



HE'S ON THE ROOF!
NIGHTWING.
THIS ISN'T GOOD.
YOU ARE IN NO SHAPE TO BE FIGHTING BLOCKBUSTER.
YOU'RE RIGHT, ORACLE. I'LL ASK HIM IF HE CAN COME BACK AT A MORE CONVENIENT TIME.

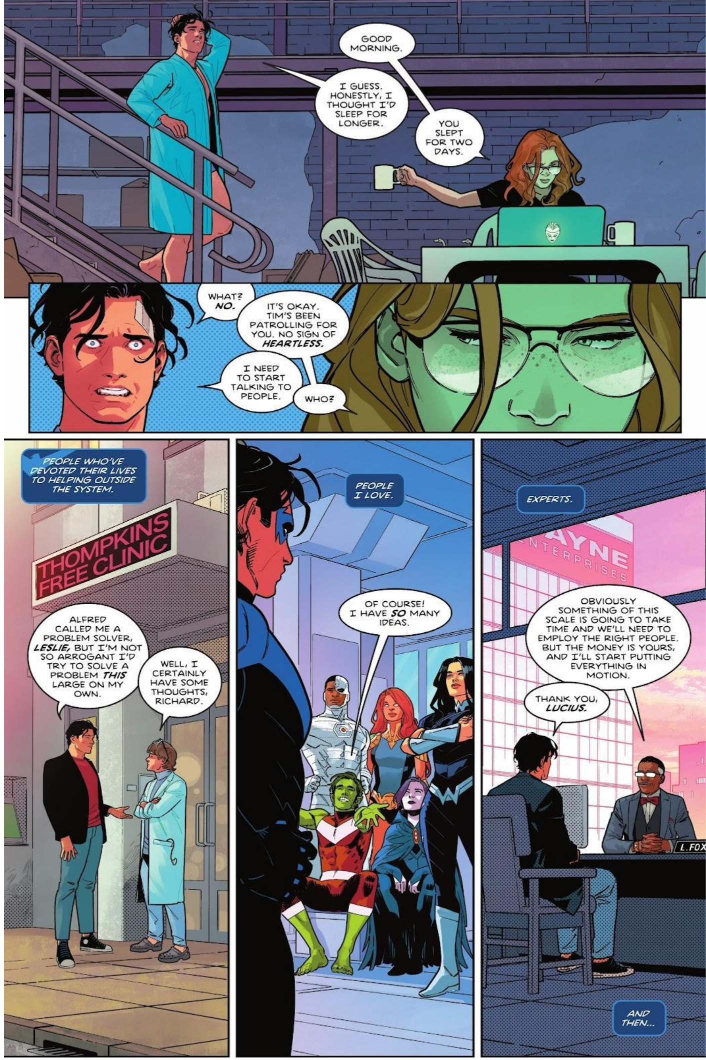

YOU KNOW, I'M SO OVER MEN WHO THINK THEY'RE SO POWERFUL THE LAW DOESN'T APPLY TO THEM.
I KNOW MAYOR ZUCCO IS WORKING FOR YOU. I'LL FIND A WAY TO PROVE IT.
IT DOESN'T MATTER. I OWN THE POLICE. I OWN THE COURTS. BLÜDHAVEN IS MINE. NO ONE WOULD ACT AGAINST ME.
SURE, YOU SCARE A LOT OF PEOPLE.
BUT DON'T CONFUSE FEAR WITH RESPECT, BLOCKBUSTER. THE PEOPLE OF THIS CITY WOULD LOVE TO SEE YOU FACE SOME CONSEQUENCES.
I AM THIS CITY.
NO. YOU'RE JUST A STANDARD ARROGANT, DELUDED THUG.
YOU'RE EVERYTHING WRONG WITH THIS CITY IN ONE CONVENIENT, OVERSIZED PACKAGE.
RAAARGHH!
I DON'T THINK YOU WANT TO FIGHT ME UP HERE, DESMOND. IT'S A LONG WAY DOWN, EVEN FOR YOU.
YOU'RE RIGHT.
FIRE.
BRRRRT

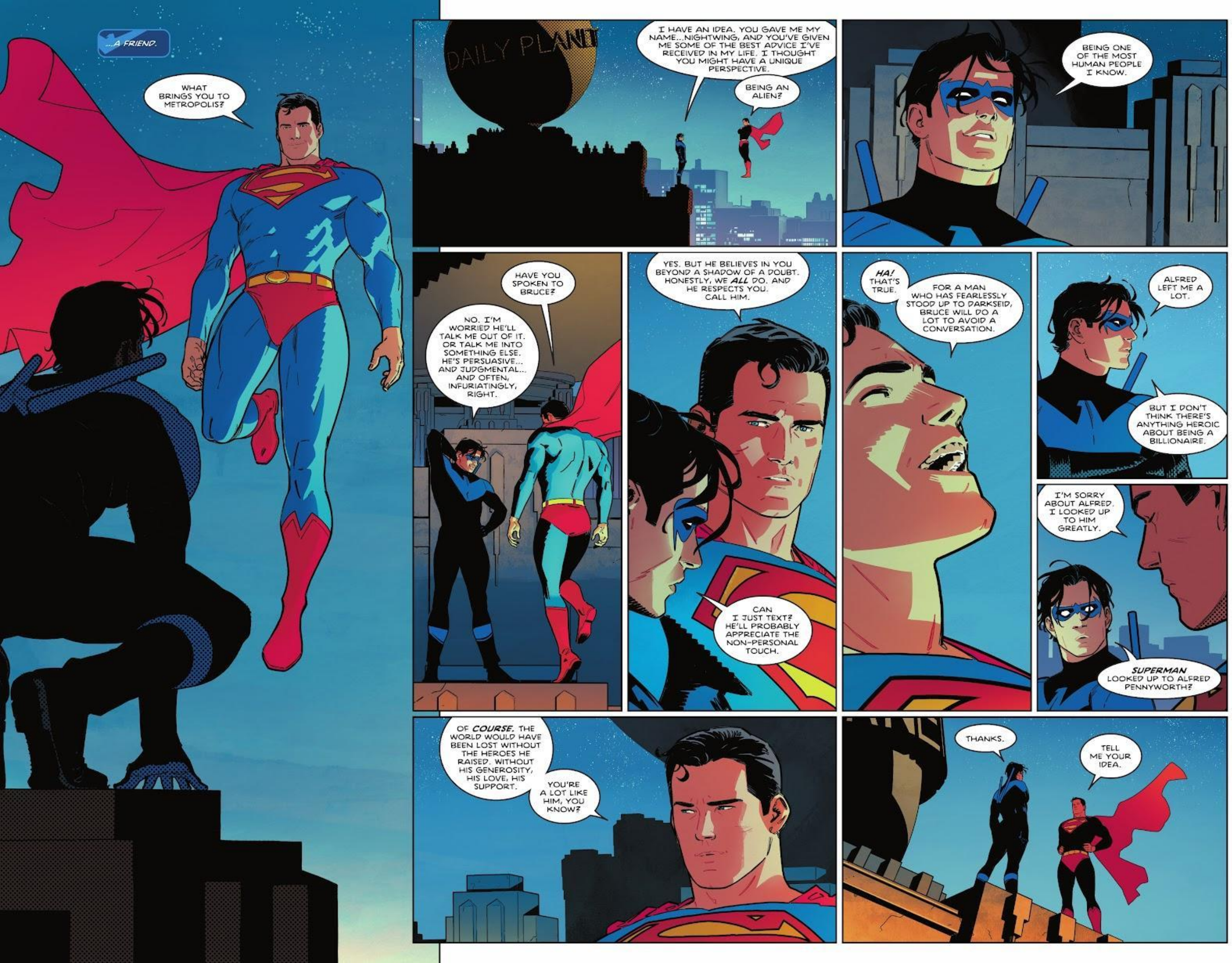

NIGHTWING, RUN!
I AM RUNNING.
I MEANT AWAY FROM THE GUNFIRE.
SORRY, ORACLE. THAT'S NOT AN OPTION.
IF THEY KEEP FIRING AT THE BUILDING, SOMEONE COULD GET HURT.
THD
TNK


BRRRRRRTTT
POLIC
NIGHTWING!
KILL HIM!

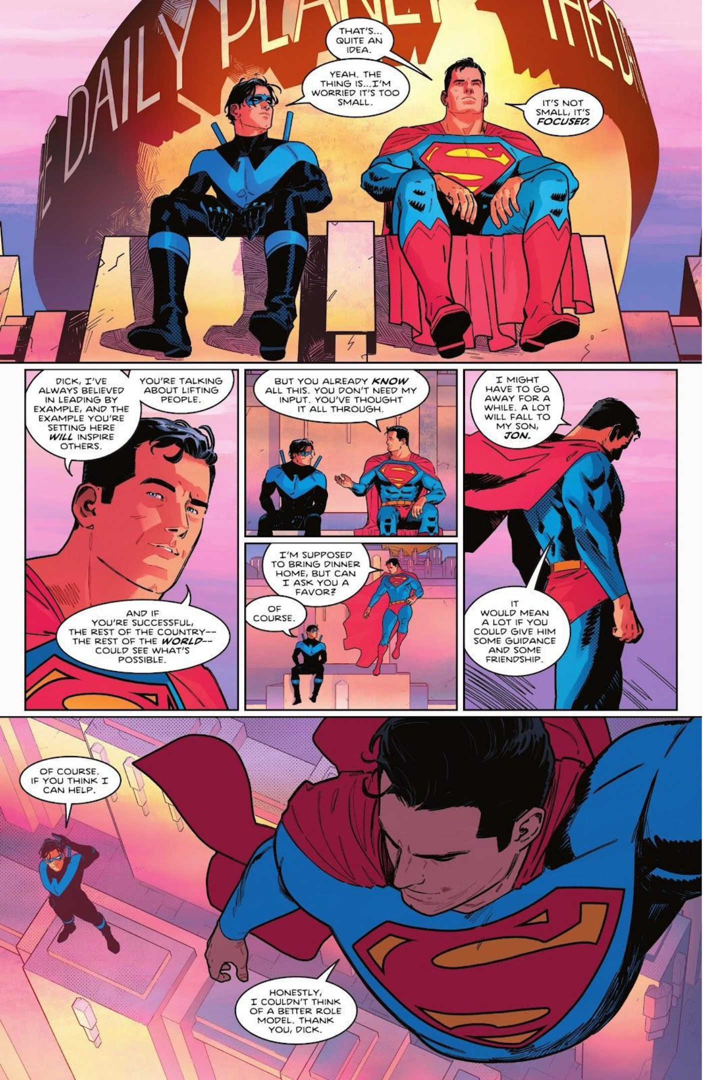

PSSH
PSSH
HUH?
THNK
THNK
THP
THP
ARRRGHHHHHH!
JUST...JUST HANDCUFF ME AND TAKE THE CHOPPER, MAN.
A DEADLY THREAT TURNED INTO A CONVENIENT GETAWAY VEHICLE.

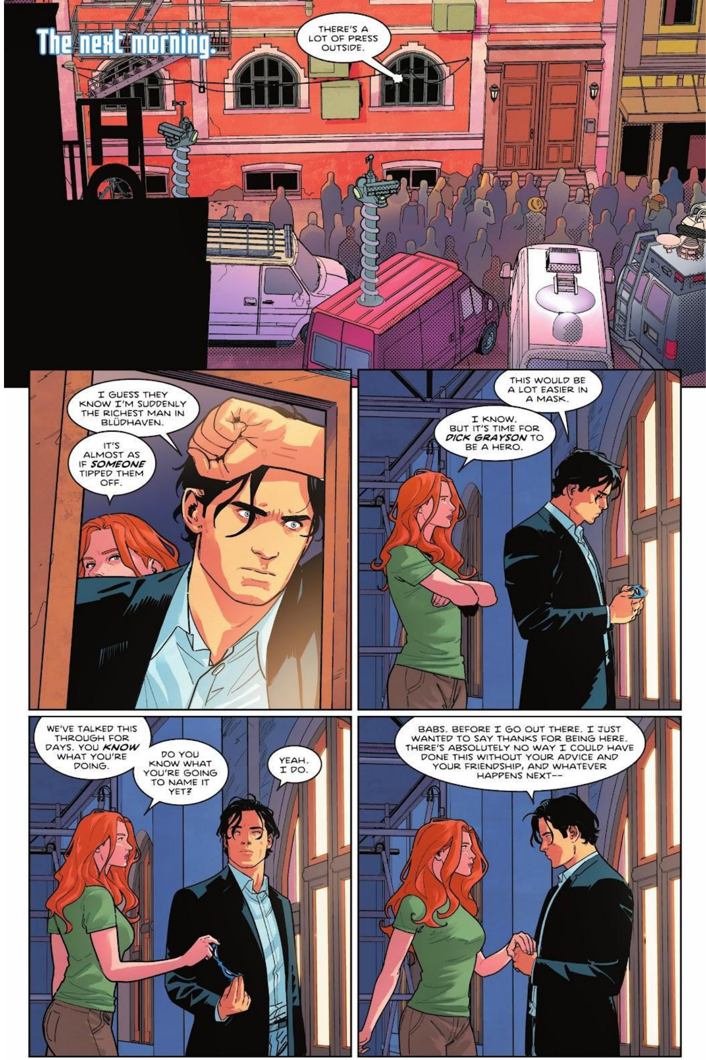

THAT WAS A REALLY LONG NIGHT.
DICK!
I'M OKAY. I'M OKAY.
YOU'RE ON THE FLOOR.
I'M OKAY ON THE FLOOR.
LET'S GET YOU TO BED.
I'VE CANCELED YOUR MEETING IN GOTHAM TOMORROW.
THAT'S... PROBABLY FOR THE BEST.
YOU HEARD? I HAVE A SISTER. AND EVEN BETTER...THERE'S A CHANCE SHE'S NOT EVIL.
I HEARD. YOU NEED TO TALK ABOUT IT?
HELLO?
GOOD NIGHT, DICK.

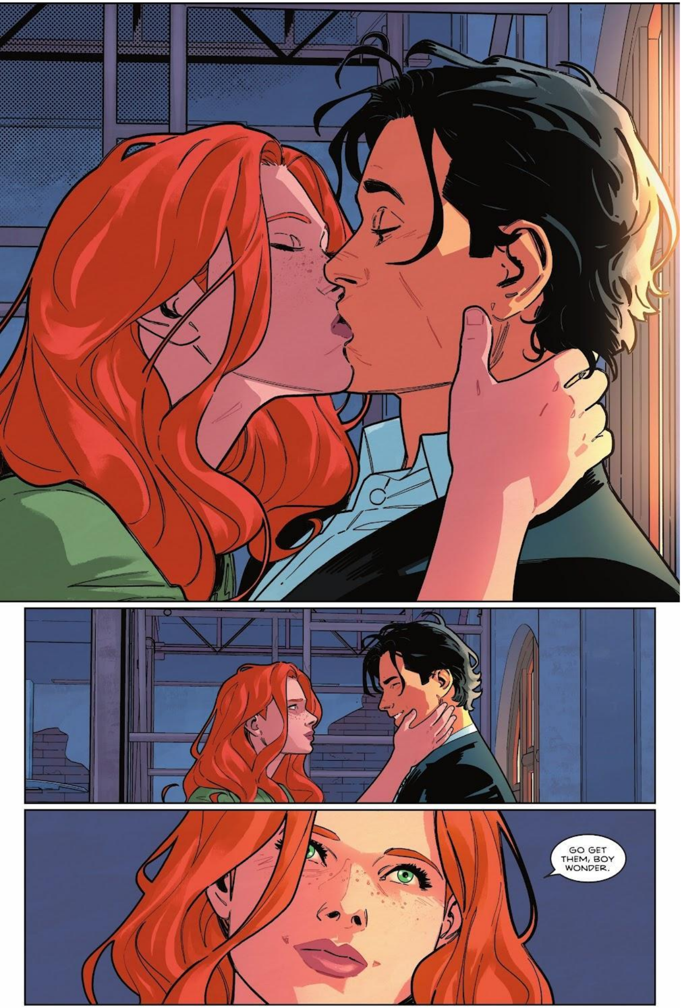

GOOD MORNING.
I GUESS. HONESTLY, I THOUGHT I'D SLEEP FOR LONGER.
YOU SLEPT FOR TWO DAYS.
WHAT? **NO.**
IT'S OKAY. TIM'S BEEN PATROLLING FOR YOU. NO SIGN OF ***HEARTLESS.***
I NEED TO START TALKING TO PEOPLE.
WHO?
PEOPLE WHO'VE DEVOTED THEIR LIVES TO HELPING OUTSIDE THE SYSTEM.
THOMPKINS FREE CLINIC
ALFRED CALLED ME A PROBLEM SOLVER, ***LESLIE,*** BUT I'M NOT SO ARROGANT I'D TRY TO SOLVE A PROBLEM ***THIS*** LARGE ON MY OWN.
WELL, I CERTAINLY HAVE SOME THOUGHTS, RICHARD.
PEOPLE I LOVE.
OF COURSE! I HAVE ***SO*** MANY IDEAS.
EXPERTS.
OBVIOUSLY SOMETHING OF THIS SCALE IS GOING TO TAKE TIME AND WE'LL NEED TO EMPLOY THE RIGHT PEOPLE. BUT THE MONEY IS YOURS, AND I'LL START PUTTING EVERYTHING IN MOTION.
THANK YOU, ***LUCIUS.***
L.FOX
AND THEN...

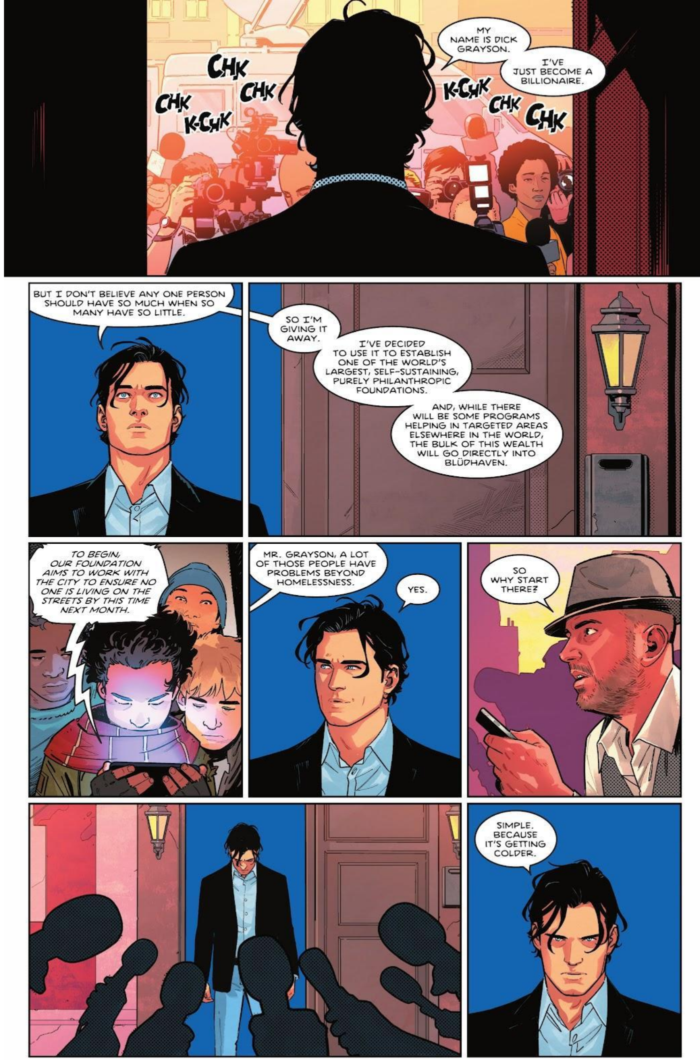


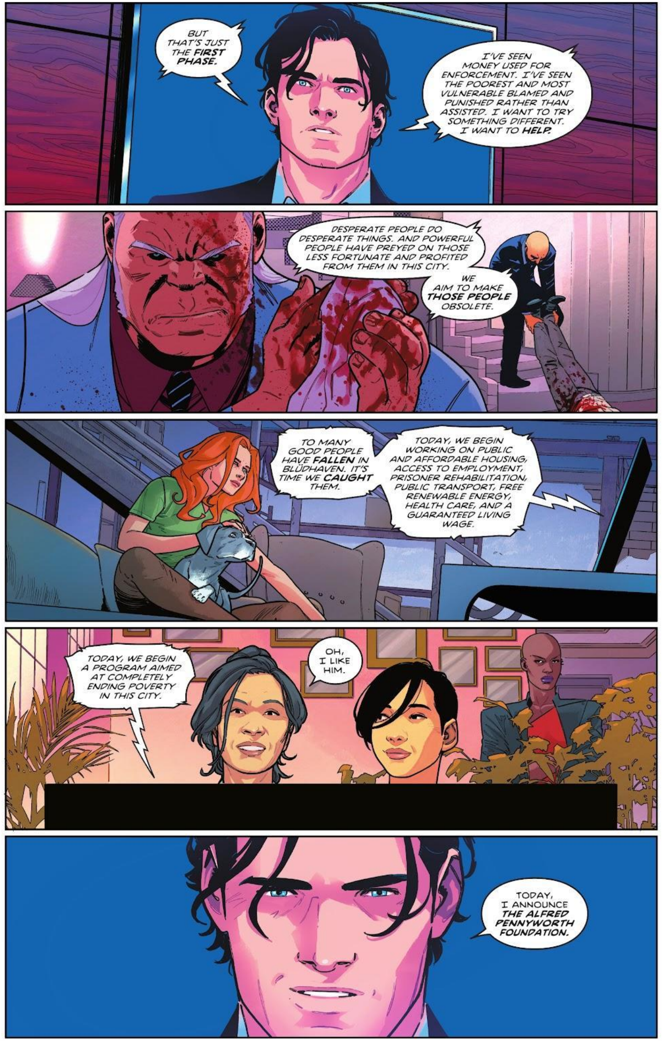
...A FRIEND.
WHAT BRINGS YOU TO METROPOLIS?
I HAVE AN IDEA. YOU GAVE ME MY NAME...NIGHTWING, AND YOU'VE GIVEN ME SOME OF THE BEST ADVICE I'VE RECEIVED IN MY LIFE. I THOUGHT YOU MIGHT HAVE A UNIQUE PERSPECTIVE.
BEING AN ALIEN?
BEING ONE OF THE MOST HUMAN PEOPLE I KNOW.
HAVE YOU SPOKEN TO BRUCE?
NO. I'M WORRIED HE'LL TALK ME OUT OF IT. OR TALK ME INTO SOMETHING ELSE. HE'S PERSUASIVE... AND JUDGMENTAL... AND OFTEN, INFURIATINGLY, RIGHT.
YES. BUT HE BELIEVES IN YOU BEYOND A SHADOW OF A DOUBT. HONESTLY, WE *ALL* DO. AND HE RESPECTS YOU. CALL HIM.
CAN I JUST TEXT? HE'LL PROBABLY APPRECIATE THE NON-PERSONAL TOUCH.
HA! THAT'S TRUE.
FOR A MAN WHO HAS FEARLESSLY STOOD UP TO DARKSEID, BRUCE WILL DO A LOT TO AVOID A CONVERSATION.
ALFRED LEFT ME A LOT.
BUT I DON'T THINK THERE'S ANYTHING HEROIC ABOUT BEING A BILLIONAIRE.
I'M SORRY ABOUT ALFRED. I LOOKED UP TO HIM GREATLY.
SUPERMAN LOOKED UP TO ALFRED PENNYWORTH?
OF *COURSE.* THE WORLD WOULD HAVE BEEN LOST WITHOUT THE HEROES HE RAISED. WITHOUT HIS GENEROSITY, HIS LOVE, HIS SUPPORT.
YOU'RE A LOT LIKE HIM, YOU KNOW?
THANKS.
TELL ME YOUR IDEA.


DAILY PLANET
THAT'S... QUITE AN IDEA.
YEAH. THE THING IS...I'M WORRIED IT'S TOO SMALL.
IT'S NOT SMALL, IT'S *FOCUSED.*
DICK, I'VE ALWAYS BELIEVED IN LEADING BY EXAMPLE, AND THE EXAMPLE YOU'RE SETTING HERE *WILL* INSPIRE OTHERS.
YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT LIFTING PEOPLE.
AND IF YOU'RE SUCCESSFUL, THE REST OF THE COUNTRY-- THE REST OF THE *WORLD*-- COULD SEE WHAT'S POSSIBLE.
BUT YOU ALREADY *KNOW* ALL THIS. YOU DON'T NEED MY INPUT. YOU'VE THOUGHT IT ALL THROUGH.
I'M SUPPOSED TO BRING DINNER HOME, BUT CAN I ASK YOU A FAVOR?
OF COURSE.
I MIGHT HAVE TO GO AWAY FOR A WHILE. A LOT WILL FALL TO MY SON, *JON.*
IT WOULD MEAN A LOT IF YOU COULD GIVE HIM SOME GUIDANCE AND SOME FRIENDSHIP.
OF COURSE. IF YOU THINK I CAN HELP.
HONESTLY, I COULDN'T THINK OF A BETTER ROLE MODEL. THANK YOU, DICK.


The next morning.
THERE'S A LOT OF PRESS OUTSIDE.
I GUESS THEY KNOW I'M SUDDENLY THE RICHEST MAN IN BLÜDHAVEN.
IT'S ALMOST AS IF *SOMEONE* TIPPED THEM OFF.
THIS WOULD BE A LOT EASIER IN A MASK.
I KNOW. BUT IT'S TIME FOR *DICK GRAYSON* TO BE A HERO.
WE'VE TALKED THIS THROUGH FOR DAYS. YOU *KNOW* WHAT YOU'RE DOING.
DO YOU KNOW WHAT YOU'RE GOING TO NAME IT YET?
YEAH. I DO.
BABS. BEFORE I GO OUT THERE. I JUST WANTED TO SAY THANKS FOR BEING HERE. THERE'S ABSOLUTELY NO WAY I COULD HAVE DONE THIS WITHOUT YOUR ADVICE AND YOUR FRIENDSHIP, AND WHATEVER HAPPENS NEXT--


GO GET THEM, BOY WONDER.


MY NAME IS DICK GRAYSON.
I'VE JUST BECOME A BILLIONAIRE.
CHK
K-CHK
CHK
CHK
K-CHK
CHK
CHK
BUT I DON'T BELIEVE ANY ONE PERSON SHOULD HAVE SO MUCH WHEN SO MANY HAVE SO LITTLE.
SO I'M GIVING IT AWAY.
I'VE DECIDED TO USE IT TO ESTABLISH ONE OF THE WORLD'S LARGEST, SELF-SUSTAINING, PURELY PHILANTHROPIC FOUNDATIONS.
AND, WHILE THERE WILL BE SOME PROGRAMS HELPING IN TARGETED AREAS ELSEWHERE IN THE WORLD, THE BULK OF THIS WEALTH WILL GO DIRECTLY INTO BLÜDHAVEN.
TO BEGIN, OUR FOUNDATION AIMS TO WORK WITH THE CITY TO ENSURE NO ONE IS LIVING ON THE STREETS BY THIS TIME NEXT MONTH.
MR. GRAYSON, A LOT OF THOSE PEOPLE HAVE PROBLEMS BEYOND HOMELESSNESS.
YES.
SO WHY START THERE?
SIMPLE. BECAUSE IT'S GETTING COLDER.



BUT THAT'S JUST THE **FIRST PHASE.**
I'VE SEEN MONEY USED FOR ENFORCEMENT. I'VE SEEN THE POOREST AND MOST VULNERABLE BLAMED AND PUNISHED RATHER THAN ASSISTED. I WANT TO TRY SOMETHING DIFFERENT. I WANT TO **HELP.**
DESPERATE PEOPLE DO DESPERATE THINGS. AND POWERFUL PEOPLE HAVE PREYED ON THOSE LESS FORTUNATE AND PROFITED FROM THEM IN THIS CITY.
WE AIM TO MAKE **THOSE PEOPLE** OBSOLETE.
TO MANY GOOD PEOPLE HAVE **FALLEN** IN BLÜDHAVEN. IT'S TIME WE **CAUGHT** THEM.
TODAY, WE BEGIN WORKING ON PUBLIC AND AFFORDABLE HOUSING, ACCESS TO EMPLOYMENT, PRISONER REHABILITATION, PUBLIC TRANSPORT, FREE RENEWABLE ENERGY, HEALTH CARE, AND A GUARANTEED LIVING WAGE.
TODAY, WE BEGIN A PROGRAM AIMED AT COMPLETELY ENDING POVERTY IN THIS CITY.
OH, I LIKE HIM.
TODAY, I ANNOUNCE **THE ALFRED PENNYWORTH FOUNDATION.**



DING! DING! DING! DING! DING!
FAMILY Chat group
Bruce, Babs, Dick, Jason, Tim, Cass, Steph...
Steph:
Wow.
Tim:
Always raising the bar higher for the rest of us. Proud of you.
Jason:
Nice work Before you give it all away, don't forget you owe me twenty bucks.
Damian:
Not that it's a competition, but you win
Cass:
!
BZZT BZZT BZZT
HEY. **YOU** DON'T USUALLY **CALL.**
I KNOW. I'M SORRY. BUT YOU...
DICK, YOU HONORED HIM TODAY.
THANK YOU.



DICK GRAYSON.
YOU KNOW THIS GUY?
YES. MY FIRST. I OWE HIM SO MUCH.
HE MADE ME WHO I AM TODAY.
BUT I HAVE PLANS FOR BLÜDHAVEN AND THEY REALLY DON'T LINE UP WITH DICK'S VISION HERE.
I'LL HAVE TO TAKE HIS HEART BEFORE HE GIVES IT TO THE CITY.
NIGHTWING
LEAPING INTO THE LIGHT PART 6
TOM TAYLOR writer BRUNO REDONDO artist
ADRIANO LUCAS colors WES ABBOTT letters
REDONDO & LUCAS cover MAX DUNBAR & HI-FI variant cover
BEN MEARES assistant editor JESSICA CHEN editor
BEN ABERNATHY group editor
Nightwing created by MARV WOLFMAN & GEORGE PÉREZ
Superman created by JERRY SIEGEL and JOE SHUSTER.
By special arrangement with the Jerry Siegel family.
NEXT: FEAR STATE!





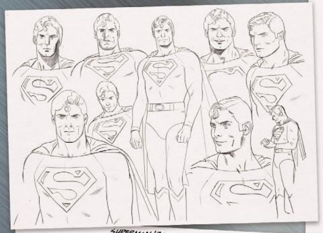
DC NATION SPOTLIGHT ON

SUPERMAN '78

The comic book exclusive you've been waiting for and the sequel you thought you'd never see!

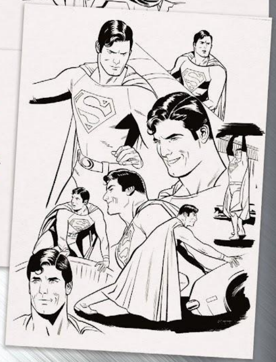
Superman '78, from writer Robert Venditti and artist Wilfredo Torres, is set in the world of *Superman: The Movie* starring the late Christopher Reeve, and starts with the crash-landing of a mysterious drone—and the arrival of Brainiac!

We opened up Torres's sketchbook for a look inside the inspired, cinematic designs for the series.











DON'T MISS
SUPERMAN '78 #1
ON SALE IN AUGUST!

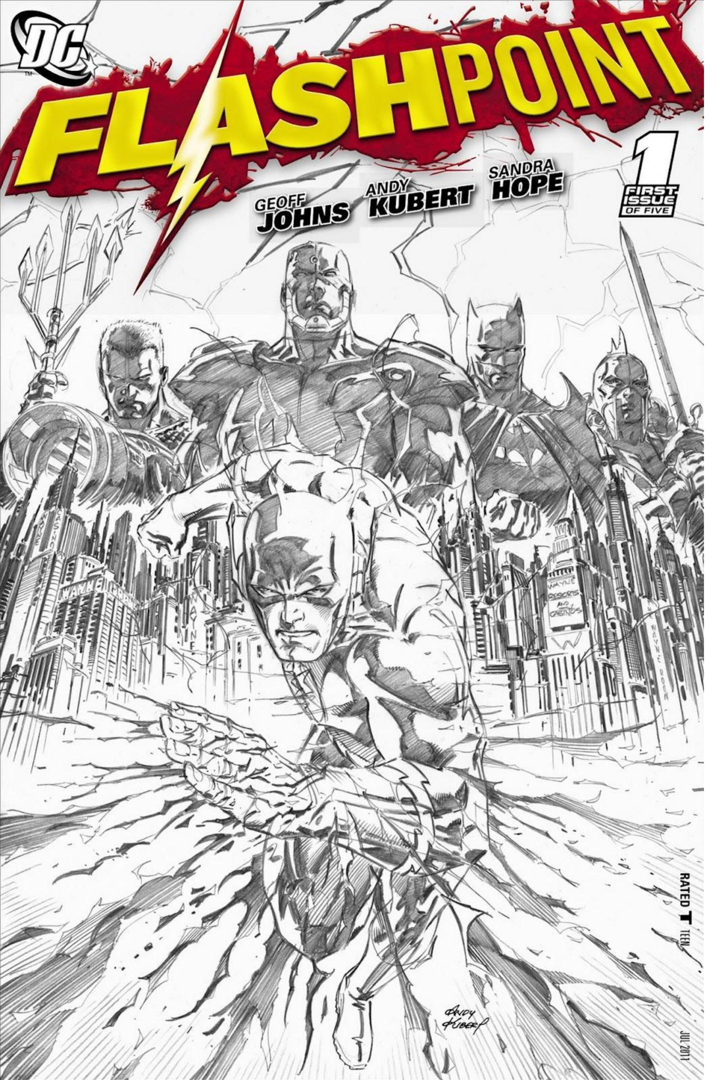
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FLASHPOINT
GEOFF JOHNS
ANDY KUBERT
SANDRA HOPE
1
FIRST ISSUE OF FIVE
RATED T TEEN
JUL 2011
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SANDRA HOPE
1
FIRST ISSUE OF FIVE
ROD REIS
RATED T TEEN
JUL 2011



THERE'S ONLY ONE THING I KNOW ABOUT LIFE.
MOM, IF IT WAS ME I'D STOP AND HELP.
I KNOW YOU WOULD, BARRY.
BUT I'M THE ONLY ONE WHO CAN GET THIS LEMON STARTED AGAIN ANYWAY.
ALLEN, NORA
STATUS: UNSOLVED
KRA-
I KNOW SOME THINGS HAPPEN BY CHANCE.



AND SOME THINGS HAPPEN BECAUSE WE MAKE THEM HAPPEN.


BARRY ALLEN WAS ONCE HAUNTED BY THE PAST.
BUT WHEN HE BECAME THE FLASH, HE LEFT THE GHOSTS BEHIND.
HE FOUND LOVE.
CENTRAL CITY PRE
WEDDING BARRY ALLEN TO IRIS WEST
A FAMILY.
AND FOR THE FIRST TIME EVER...


FRIENDS.
BARRY THOUGHT YESTERDAY WAS FINALLY BEHIND HIM...
...BUT SOMEBODY WOULDN'T LET HIM ESCAPE IT.
WHEN BARRY CAME TO ME FOR HELP, I TURNED HIM AWAY.
I'M NOT THE HERO OF THIS STORY.
I'M A MAN WHO'S BEEN CORRUPTED BY HIS OWN UNBEARABLE PAIN. I'M A MAN WHO HAS TOO MUCH BLOOD ON HIS HANDS TO BE CALLED GOOD.
I'M A MAN WHO HAD NOTHING LEFT TO LIVE FOR--
--UNTIL THE DAY I MET THE FLASH.
FLASHPOINT
CHAPTER ONE OF FIVE:
Geoff Johns-WRITER
Andy Kubert-PENCILLER
Sandra Hope-INKER
Alex Sinclair-COLORIST
Nick J. Napolitano-LETTERER
Cover by Andy Kubert, Sandra Hope & Alex Sinclair
Variant Cover by Ivan Reis, George Pérez, & Rod Reis
Editors: Adam Schlagman & Rex Ogle
Executive Editor: Eddie Berganza

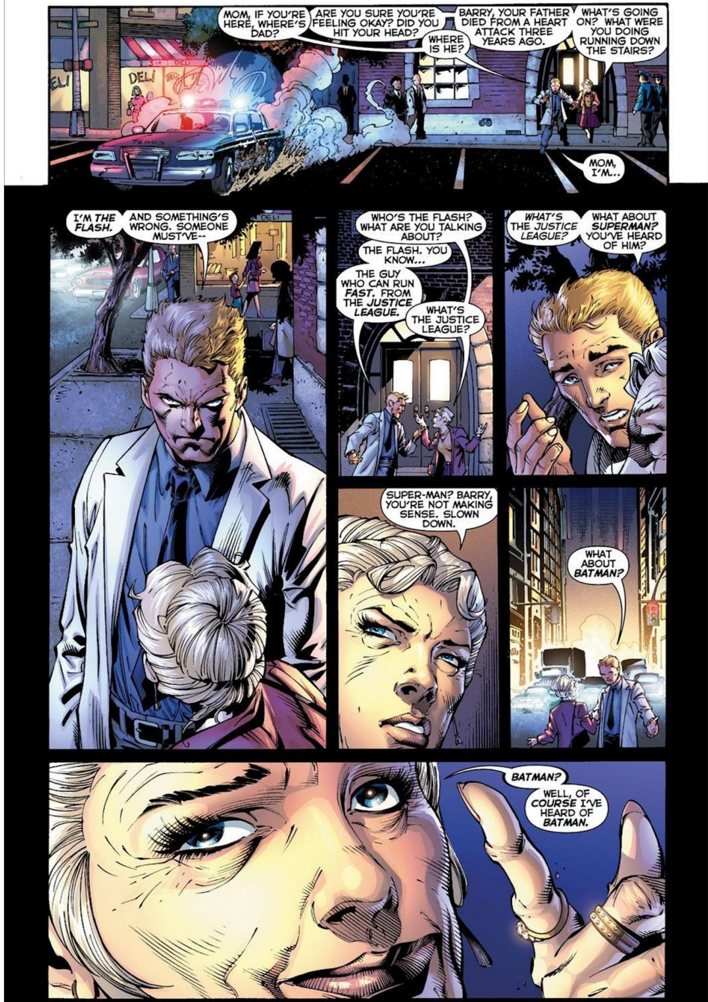

BARRY!
BARRY, WAKE UP!
C'MON, BARRY. I KNOW WE'VE BEEN PULLING EIGHTEEN-HOUR SHIFTS ON MISS ALCHEMY'S MURDER, BUT DIRECTOR SINGH'S NOT GOING TO CARE.
FORREST?
MISS ALCHEMY? WHO'S MISS ALCHEMY?
YOU BETTER RUB THE SAND OUT OF YOUR EYES BEFORE--
ALLEN!
TOO LATE.
SLEEPING ON THE JOB AGAIN?
GIVE HIM A BREAK, SINGH. WE'VE BEEN PULLING ALL-NIGHTERS TRYING TO BREAK THIS CASE.
WE KNOW WHO MURDERED MISS ALCHEMY, FORREST. ALL I'M BEGGING YOU GUYS FOR IS EVIDENCE. YOU GET IT AND WE CAN FINALLY REVEAL THE TRUTH BEHIND CENTRAL CITY'S "GREATEST HERO--"
--CITIZEN COLD.
YOU MEAN CAPTAIN COLD? OF THE ROGUES?
WHO THE HELL ARE THE ROGUES?
DIRECTOR SINGH!
THERE'S A SHOOT-OUT BETWEEN OUR "HERO" AND THE PIED PIPER OUTSIDE THE CITIZEN COLD MUSEUM.
IF WE'RE RIGHT, COLD'S GOING AFTER THE ONE WITNESS WE'VE GOT TO THIS MURDER!
PUBLIC SUPPORT'S TOO STRONG. THE CHIEF WON'T LET US GO AFTER COLD UNTIL WE HAVE ROCK SOLID EVIDENCE. DAMMIT, ALLEN, I NEED...?
ALLEN?!


MY RING...?
BARRY?


ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?
MOM?


MOM?
I...MOM? WHAT ARE YOU...?
YOU PROMISED YOU'D TAKE ME TO DINNER ON MY BIRTHDAY.
IT'S MY BIRTHDAY.
REMEMBER?
ARE YOU REALLY HERE?
OF COURSE.
RIGHT ON TIME.
LIKE ALWAYS.


IT'S GOOD TO SEE YOU, MOM.
WELL, IT'S GOOD TO SEE YOU *TOO,* BARRY.


MOM, IF YOU'RE HERE, WHERE'S DAD?
ARE YOU SURE YOU'RE FEELING OKAY? DID YOU HIT YOUR HEAD?
WHERE IS HE?
BARRY, YOUR FATHER DIED FROM A HEART ATTACK THREE YEARS AGO.
WHAT'S GOING ON? WHAT WERE YOU DOING RUNNING DOWN THE STAIRS?
MOM, I'M...
I'M *THE FLASH.*
AND SOMETHING'S WRONG. SOMEONE MUST'VE--
WHO'S THE FLASH? WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?
THE FLASH. YOU KNOW...
THE GUY WHO CAN RUN *FAST.* FROM THE *JUSTICE LEAGUE.*
WHAT'S THE JUSTICE LEAGUE?
WHAT'S THE *JUSTICE LEAGUE?*
WHAT ABOUT *SUPERMAN?* YOU'VE HEARD OF HIM?
SUPER-MAN? BARRY, YOU'RE NOT MAKING SENSE. SLOW DOWN.
WHAT ABOUT *BATMAN?*
BATMAN?
WELL, OF *COURSE* I'VE HEARD OF *BATMAN.*


"WHO HASN'T?"
GOTHAM CITY.
I SEE YOU.
WAYNE RESORTS AND CASINOS
GRAND
WAYNE
DICE
NEW ORLEANS CHOPS
WAYNE CASINOS PRESENTS QUEEN OF HEARTS


WAYNE LUCKY 7 CASINOS
OH, NO! NO NO N--
TELL ME, YO-YO?
WHERE'S THE JOKER?!


WHERE'S THE JOKER? THE JOKER'S IN ALL OF US, BATMAN!
IT'S IN YOU. ME. THE PEOPLE OF GOTHAM CITY. WE'RE ALL A LITTLE BIT CRAZY.
I'M NOT CRAZY.
NO ONE IN THEIR RIGHT MIND WOULD STAY IN GOTHAM, WOULD THEY?
TELL ME WHERE THE JOKER'S FUNHOUSE IS THIS TIME. TELL ME WHILE YOU CAN STILL TALK.
IT'S ON THE TIP OF MY TONGUE.
THEN LET'S GET IT OFF.
JUDGE DENT'S TWINS WERE KIDNAPPED LAST NIGHT. I KNOW THE JOKER HAS THEM.
WHERE ARE THEY?!
EVEN IF I DID KNOW, IT WOULDN'T DO YOU ANY GOOD, BATMAN.
IT'S PROBABLY TOO LATE. THEY'RE PROBABLY ALREADY DEAD.
THEN SO ARE YOU.
WAIT--!


NNFFF!
CYBORG?
I SURRENDER.
SMART.
BATMAN!
WAYNE INN


YOU SHOULD'VE LET HER HIT THE GROUND.
YOU'RE NOT GOING TO ASK HOW I FOUND YOU?
THERMAL VISION. CYBERNETIC HEARING. PLUGGING INTO ONE OF YOUR SATELLITES TO GET A BIRD'S-EYE VIEW OF GOTHAM.
IT WAS EASIER THAN THAT. IT'S NIGHT IN GOTHAM.
YOU'RE HUNTING.
AND YOU ALWAYS CHASE THEM TO THE LEDGE OF THIS PARTICULAR ALLEY.
IT'S A LONG WAY DOWN.
SHE SLIPPED.
A LOT OF THEM SLIP.
BUT I'M NOT HERE TO JUDGE YOU, BATMAN.
YOU'D BE THE FIRST.
WE NEED YOUR HELP.
WE?
VEET
YEAH.


US.
EVERYONE FALL IN. IT'S TIME TO VOTE.


BARRY, WHAT ARE WE DOING HERE?
I NEED TO TALK TO IRIS.
IRIS? OH, IS THIS A NEW FRIEND OF YOURS? ARE YOU DATING?
CENTRAL CITY CITIZEN
I'LL ONLY BE A MINUTE, MOM.
EXCUSE ME. I'M LOOKING FOR IRIS ALLEN.
THEN YOU BETTER KEEP LOOKING. THERE'S NO IRIS ALLEN HERE, PAL.
OH, WAIT. YOU MEAN IRIS WEST?
YES, I GUESS I--
NO ONE CAN DO THIS BUT ME, VANESSA.
AND NO ONE ELSE IS VOLUNTEERING.
BECAUSE IT'S TOO FREAKING DANGEROUS, IRIS.
RUMOR IS LOIS LANE IS ALREADY BEHIND ENEMY LINES. SOMEONE ON OUR TEAM NEEDS TO TELL THE WORLD WHAT'S GOING ON IN WHAT'S LEFT OF EUROPE. SOMEONE NEEDS TO FIND OUT WHAT CAUSED THIS WAR IN THE FIRST PLACE!
LET'S TALK ABOUT THIS OVER A CAPPUCCINO.
YOU'RE BUYING.
IRIS!
IRIS, IT'S--
IRIS! SWEETIE!


DON'T TELL ME YOU'RE STILL TRYING TO GET APPROVAL FOR THIS INSANE TRIP.
IT'S NOT INSANE, JOHN, IT'S IMPORTANT.
ONCE HER MIND'S MADE UP, THE ONLY ONE WHO CAN TALK IRIS WEST OUT OF ANYTHING IS HER NEPHEW.
MAYBE YOU CAN TALK HER OUT OF IT.
WHY IS EVERYONE SO WORKED UP?
BECAUSE NO ONE WANTS ANYTHING HAPPENING TO YOU, IRIS.
ESPECIALLY ME.
WHAT IS IT?
NOTHING, I GUESS. I JUST...
"...FELT LIKE WE WERE BEING WATCHED."
HOW NICE TO SEE YOU ALIVE AND WELL, MRS. ALLEN.
HELLO?
MOM!
I'M SORRY, BUT WE'RE GOING TO HAVE TO DO DINNER LATER.
DO I OWN A CAR?
NO.
CAN I BORROW YOURS?



"I NEED TO GO SEE SOMEONE."
IT'S BATMAN! HE'S *REAL.*
HE'S OLDER THAN I THOUGHT.
HE'S BEEN DOING IT LONGER THAN US.
THEY'RE ALL *HOLOGRAMS.* SOME OF THEM ARE STILL IN HIDING. SOME REFUSED TO APPEAR IN PERSON.
YOU KNOW *WHY* WE'RE HERE, BATMAN.
OVER ONE HUNDRED MILLION PEOPLE DIED WHEN ATLANTIS SANK WESTERN EUROPE INTO THE OCEAN.
BEFORE THAT, THIRTY-TWO MILLION WERE SLAUGHTERED WHEN THE AMAZONS CLAIMED THE UNITED KINGDOM AS NEW THEMYSCIRA.
THEY *BOTH* WANT TO RULE THE WORLD.
WE HAVE TO TAKE DOWN *AQUAMAN* AND *WONDER WOMAN* BEFORE THEY RAVAGE THE REST OF EARTH FIGHTING OVER IT.
YOU KNOW HOW POWERFUL THEY ARE. YOU KNOW THE ALLIES THEY HAVE. I NEED TO KNOW AND I NEED TO KNOW NOW--
--WHO'S WITH *ME?*



I *AM!*
I HAVEN'T BEEN INVITED TO *ANYTHING* IN SO LONG. IT SOUNDS LIKE FUN--
FUN? MAYBE FOR *YOU,* ELEMENT WOMAN, BUT A GUY LIKE ME, HELL, *ANY* GUY SETS FOOT ON THE GOOD OL' U.K...
...I HEARD YOU'RE *SINGIN' SOPRANO.*
I'M IN, CYBORG. WE'VE GOT BATMAN ON OUR SIDE. AND I OWE YOU THAT MUCH FOR GIVING ME MY VOICE BACK.
BUT I *DON'T* LIKE THE MIXED COMPANY. CITIZEN COLD BEING THE *PRIME EXAMPLE.*
HEY, JUST BECAUSE YOU GOT A LITTLE *CRUSH* ON ME THAT'S NOT RETURNED, DON'T GO SPOUTIN' OFF YOUR *USUAL* PARANOID RANT.
YOU TRIED TO SILENCE ME *ONCE,* COLD. YOU *SHATTERED* MY VOCAL CORDS.
EVERYONE KNOWS YOUR *REP* AS SOME KIND OF *ALTRUISTIC DO-GOODER* IS A LIE.
PROVE IT, PIPER. AND LOWER THE WEAPON. AIN'T GONNA DO MUCH GOOD IF WE'RE NOT REALLY HERE.



I KINDA HAVE TO AGREE WITH THE PIED PIPER. I KNOW WE'RE STRAPPED, CYBORG, BUT YOU'RE ASKING ME TO FIGHT ALONGSIDE THE OUTSIDER?
THAT PSYCHO'S CORPORATION HAS BEEN HUNTING ME DOWN FOR MONTHS! I HAD TO QUIT SCHOOL! I LOST MY GIRLFRIEND!
THE OUTSIDER RUINED MY LIFE!
YOU'RE FIFTEEN, FAROOQ. YOU DON'T KNOW ANYTHING ABOUT LIFE.
AND YOU NEVER WILL IF AQUAMAN AND WONDER WOMAN ARE LEFT UNCHECKED.
AND AS FOR YOUR PREDICAMENT, YOU CLAIM I'M THE ONE HUNTING FOR YOU? YOU COULD KEEP MY HOMELAND LIT FOR YEARS... OR ANY OTHER COUNTRY ON THIS PLANET. YOU'RE THE CLEANEST AND MOST POWERFUL SOURCE OF ELECTRICITY ON EARTH, BLACKOUT. NOT THAT I'M ADMITTING TO ANYTHING; INDIA WOULD BENEFIT GREATLY FROM PLUGGING YOU IN--
--BUT SO WOULD EVERYONE ELSE.
NO ONE IS FRIENDS HERE. WE ALL KNOW THAT.
BUT RIGHT NOW THE PAST HAS TO BE THE PAST.
TOMORROW IS ALL THAT MATTERS.
THIS WAR IS BAD FOR BUSINESS. MY BUSINESS.
AS MUCH AS I LOATHE SLUMMING IT ALONG-SIDE EVERYONE HERE, YOURSELF EXCLUDED, CYBORG...
...THE OUTSIDER IS ALSO IN.
JUST DON'T EXPECT ME TO GET MY SUIT DIRTY.



YEAH. I'M IN TOO.
ABIN?
IF THE GUARDIANS WILL ALLOW IT, I WILL HELP YOU PRESERVE YOUR POLITICAL BORDERS.
I DREAMT ABOUT THIS IN 1937. OR '38.
I SHOULD'VE WRITTEN IT DOWN, BUT DREAMS ON PAPER ARE NEVER AS GOOD AS THE REAL THING.
WITH BATMAN HERE... SO AM I.
YOU GOT ME, RIGHT, CYBORG? I SAID, "YES."
I MEAN IT'S NOT EVERY DAY I GET TO BELONG TO SOMETHING!
SHE'D VOLUNTEER FOR A TRIP TO HELL.
LEAVE ELEMENT WOMAN BE, ENCHANTRESS. SHE CAN'T HELP IT.
MY META-VEST CAN SENSE IT WITHIN HER.
EMILY SUNG, THE ELEMENT WOMAN, IS A BIT MAD.


NO.
WE NEED TO PUT IT TO A VOTE, ENCHANTRESS. OUR ASSOCIATES REMAIN UNREVEALED, BUT THEIR VOICES NEED TO BE HEARD. IF I MAY ASK?
WHAT ABOUT THE SECRET SEVEN, SHADE?
DO WE FIGHT?
I'M INCLINED TO SAY "YES," RAC.
NO.
NO.
YES.
YES.
NO.
YES.
FOUR TO THREE. SO YES.
YOU'RE ALWAYS UNDERMINING ME, PRINCESS.

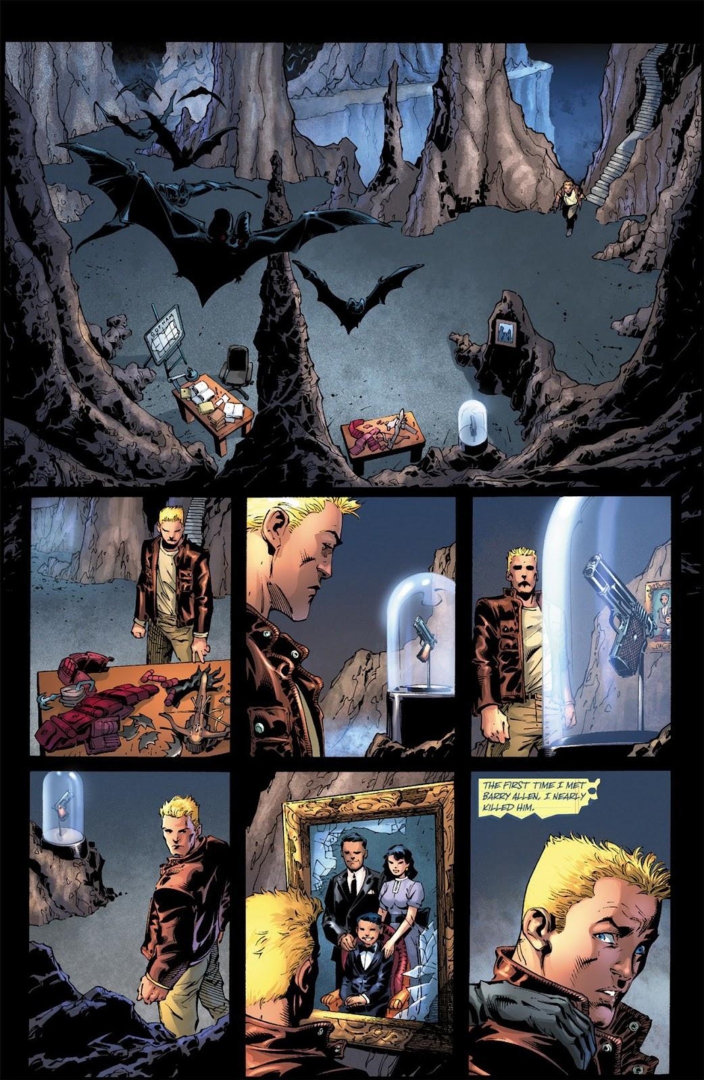

WE NEED TO VOTE TOO!
TAWNY AND I BOTH SAY, "NO."
PEDRO, TAWNY CAN'T TALK.
BILLY, PARIS IS LIKE TWO MILES UNDERWATER! WHAT'S TAWNY SUPPOSED TO DO, HUH?
TIGERS CAN'T BREATHE UNDERWATER AND NEITHER CAN I!
I GOTTA SAY, BILLY, I KNOW THE COURAGE OF ACHILLES IS FLOWING THROUGH YOU, BUT HAVING THE POWER OF ZEUS LETS ME THINK LOUD AND CLEAR.
THESE AREN'T THE DROIDS WE'RE LOOKING FOR.
THIS HAS TO BE A TEAM EFFORT, FREDDY. AND THAT'S WHAT OUR FAMILY IS ALL ABOUT.
YOU AND BILLY MIGHT BE REAL FAMILY, MARY, BUT WE'RE NOT.
WE'RE JUST A BUNCH OF KIDS WHO WERE STUCK ON A SUBWAY CAR THAT GOT HIJACKED TO HOGWARTS.
YOU'VE GOT THE WISDOM OF SOLOMON, EUGENE. WHAT DO YOU THINK?
I THINK THAT'S QUITE OBVIOUS, DARLA DEAR.
WE SHOULD ASK CAPTAIN THUNDER.
YEAH, LET'S ASK CAPTAIN THUNDER!
NOT HIM AGAIN!
HERE WE GO.


SHAZAM!
WONDER WOMAN LEFT QUITE AN IMPRESSION ON ME.
IT'S TIME I LEFT ONE ON HER.
WHEN DO WE LEAVE?

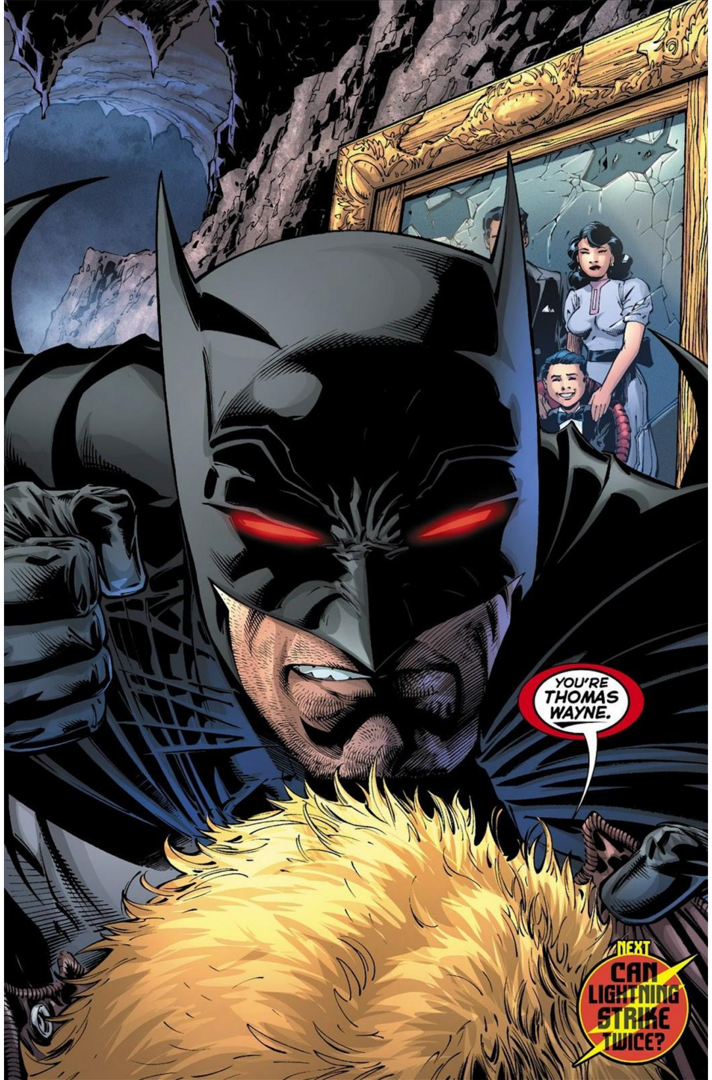

AS SOON AS WE FORMULATE OUR PLAN.
THAT'S WHERE YOU COME IN, BATMAN. THERE'S NO BETTER TACTICIAN ON THE PLANET--
FORGET IT.
BATMAN--
YOU DON'T STAND A CHANCE, CYBORG.
AQUAMAN AND WONDER WOMAN AREN'T INVINCIBLE.
I'M NOT TALKING ABOUT THE KING AND THE QUEEN.
I'M TALKING ABOUT THIS FIGHT CLUB YOU'RE TRYING TO PUT TOGETHER.
AS SOON AS YOU ACTUALLY GET ALL OF THESE IDIOTS IN ONE ROOM--
--THEY'LL KILL EACH OTHER AND THEN THEY'LL KILL YOU.
THE WORLD'S GOING TO ERUPT INTO WAR, BATMAN! AND IF IT DOES, THERE WON'T BE ANYTHING LEFT! INCLUDING GOTHAM! INCLUDING YOU!
ONE CAN ONLY HOPE.
I THOUGHT YOU COULD DELIVER BATMAN. IF HE'S OUT, THE OUTSIDER IS OUT.
SORRY, VIC.
...THE SECRET SEVEN WILL HAVE TO RECONSIDER...
...IT'S TOO DANGEROUS...
"...IT'S SUICIDE...
WAY


Gotham City
13 miles
ONKKK
EEEEERP
I BRAKE FOR
NO REASON.
HONKKKKK


HELLO?
ALFRED?
KREEEKK

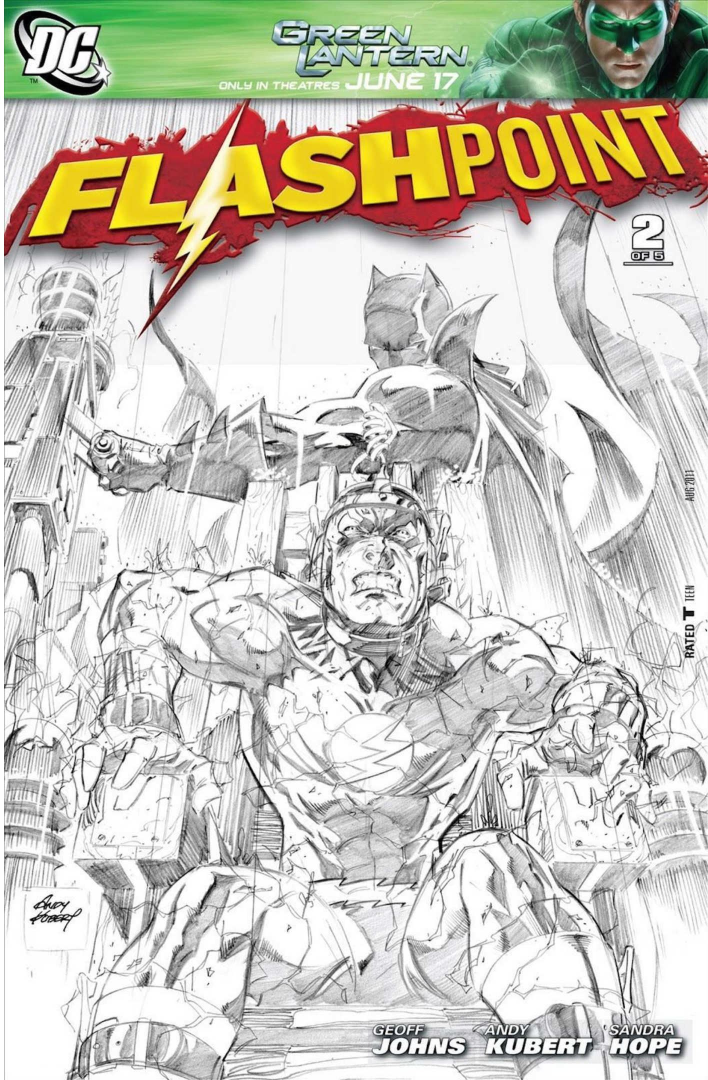

THE FIRST TIME I MET BARRY ALLEN, I NEARLY KILLED HIM.


LIKE I SAID, I'M NOT THE HERO OF THIS STORY.
WHO ARE YOU?
WHO THE HELL ARE--?
BRUCE, WAIT!
YOU HAVE TO REMEMBER. IT'S ME. IT'S BARRY ALLEN. BRUCE--
BRUCE?
I KNOW YOUR REAL NAME. I KNOW WHAT HAPPENED.
BRUCE...
BRUCE IS DEAD.
I WATCHED HIM DIE.
THIS IS... MY GOD... YOU...

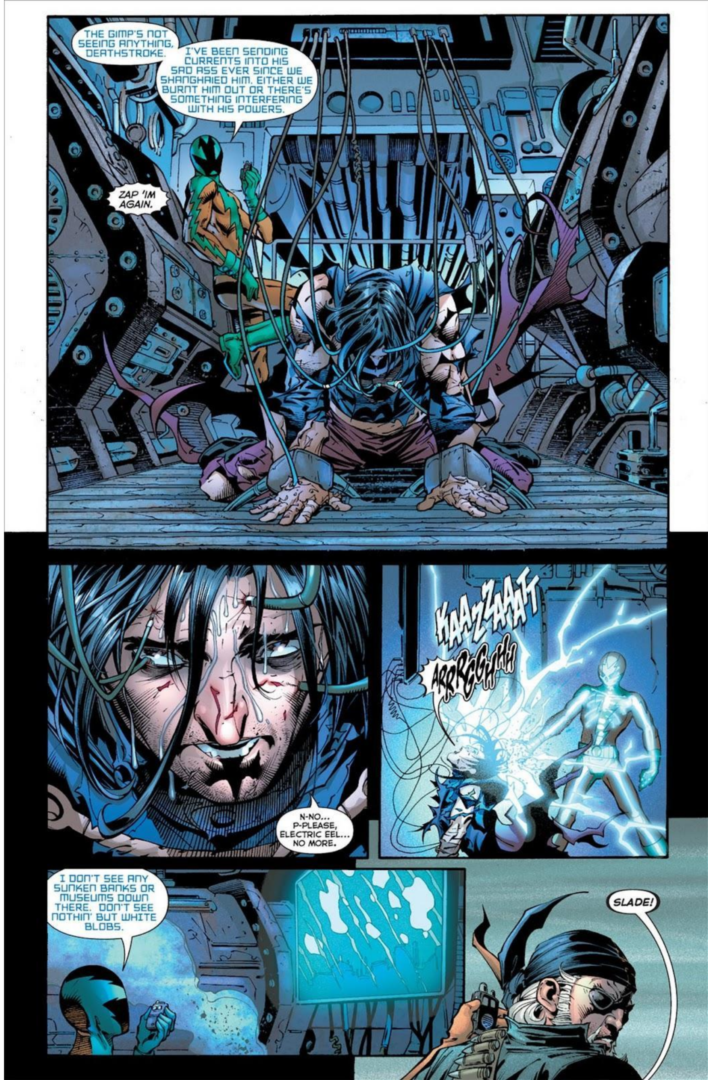

YOU'RE THOMAS WAYNE.
NEXT
CAN LIGHTNING STRIKE TWICE?


GREEN LANTERN
ONLY IN THEATRES JUNE 17
FLASHPOINT
2 OF 5
AUG 2011
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GEOFF JOHNS
ANDY KUBERT
SANDRA HOPE


DC
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DING DING DING
DING DING DING
WHAT'S SONAR SEE DOWN THERE?


THE GIMP'S NOT SEEING ANYTHING, DEATHSTROKE.
I'VE BEEN SENDING CURRENTS INTO HIS SAD ASS EVER SINCE WE SHANGHAIED HIM. EITHER WE BURNT HIM OUT OR THERE'S SOMETHING INTERFERING WITH HIS POWERS.
ZAP 'IM AGAIN.
N-NO... P-PLEASE, ELECTRIC EEL... NO MORE.
KAAZZAAAT
ARRRGGHHH
I DON'T SEE ANY SUNKEN BANKS OR MUSEUMS DOWN THERE. DON'T SEE NOTHIN' BUT WHITE BLOBS.
SLADE!


WE'VE GOT ANOTHER SHIP OUT THERE!
GET TO THE GUNS, MACHISTE.
I SEE THEIR FLAG!
IT'S WARLORD.
IF PLASMUS IS STILL ON MORGAN'S CREW WE'RE GONNA NEED ICICLE UP HERE PRONTO--
WHAT HAPPENED?
THEY SAILED TOO FAR INLAND, CLAYFACE. AND SO DID WE.


FLASHPOINT
CHAPTER TWO OF FIVE:
Geoff Johns-WRITER Andy Kubert-PENCILLER
Sandra Hope-INKER Alex Sinclair-COLORIST
Nick J. Napolitano-LETTERER
Kate Stewart-ASST. EDITOR
Rex Ogle-ASSOC. EDITOR
Eddie Berganza-EXECUTIVE EDITOR
Cover by Andy Kubert & Sandra Hope w/Alex Sinclair
Variant Cover by Ivan Reis, George Pérez w/Rod Reis
PARIS.
EVERYONE TO THEIR STATIONS!
WE NEED TO TURN THIS SHIP AROU--!
BAAMMMMM
YOU'RE OBVIOUSLY NOT WORKING WITH WONDER WOMAN AND HER AMAZONS.


BUT THAT DOESN'T MEAN YOU'RE NOT OUR ENEMIES.
OCEAN MASTER.
YES, MY BROTHER.
NO SURVIVORS.


GOTHAM CITY.
MY GOD...
THAT NIGHT IN CRIME ALLEY...
...BRUCE WAS KILLED, WASN'T HE?
INSTEAD OF YOU.
WHAT ARE YOU DOING--?


AAAAAAAHHHHHH!
KRRAK
YOU...BROKE MY FINGER... ALMOST BROKE MY ARM.
I'M GOING TO BREAK EVERY BONE IN YOUR BODY UNTIL YOU TELL ME WHO THE HELL YOU ARE AND WHY THE HELL YOU'RE HERE. DID THE JOKER SEND YOU?
WHAT? NO.
MY NAME IS BARRY ALLEN, BUT LIKE YOU, I HAVE ANOTHER IDENTITY. I'M THE FLASH.
AFTER I WAS STRUCK BY A BOLT OF LIGHTNING, I BECAME THE FASTEST MAN ALIVE--
YOU WEREN'T FAST ENOUGH TO AVOID THAT, YOU DELUSIONAL SON-OF-A-BITCH.


THAT'S BECAUSE I DON'T HAVE MY POWERS, DR. WAYNE. AND NO ONE REMEMBERS THERE EVER BEING A FLASH.
I'M NOT YOUR ENEMY.
AND I NEED YOUR HELP!
YOU CAME TO THE WRONG PLACE.
I... MUST BE ON A DIFFERENT EARTH.
OR TRAPPED IN ONE OF MIRROR MASTER'S MIRROR WORLDS.
GET UP.
AHHHHH!!


IT HAPPENED... LAST YEAR. AQUAMAN AND ATLANTIS FLOODING EUROPE.
AND BEFORE THAT WONDER WOMAN LEADING THE AMAZONS...ON A BLITZKRIEG IN LONDON.
MY MEMORIES ARE CHANGING.
THIS ISN'T A PARALLEL EARTH OR A MIRROR WORLD...THIS IS HOME.
THIS IS REAL.
THAT'S THE FIRST THING YOU'VE SAID THAT'S MADE SENSE.

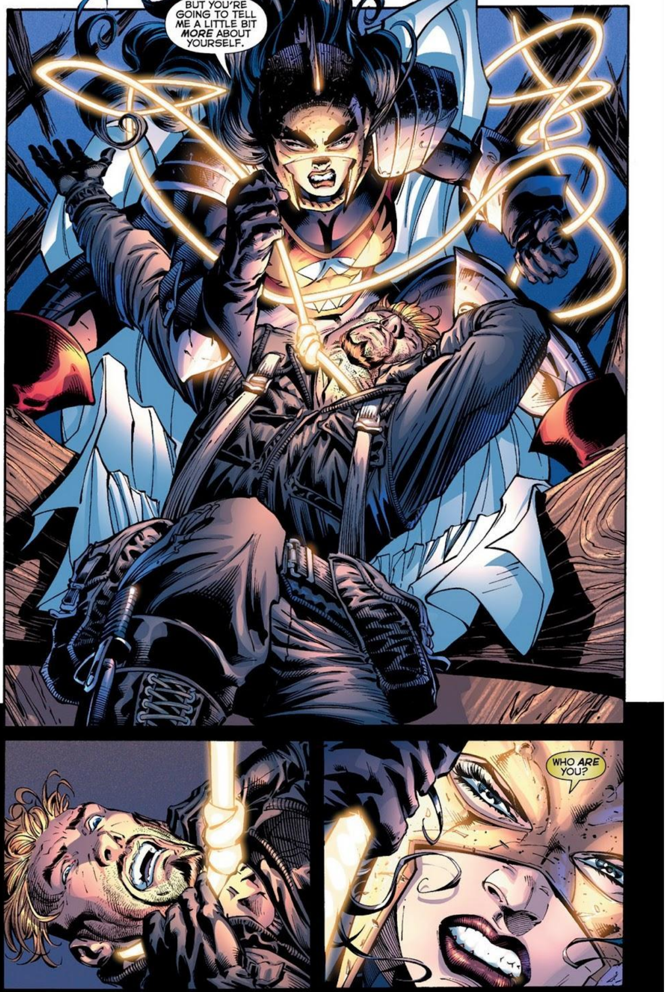

MY RING?
I'LL SHOW YOU I'M TELLING THE TRUTH ABOUT WHO I AM. I CAN PROVE IT.
I KEEP MY UNIFORM HIDDEN IN A COMPARTMENT IN THIS RING. IT'S MADE OF A FRICTION-PROOF MATERIAL THAT EXPANDS ON CONTACT WITH THE AIR.
FIZZSSHHH


THIS ISN'T...
HE COULD BE WATCHING US RIGHT NOW. MOVING SO FAST HE'S *INVISIBLE.*
WHO?
THE MAN THIS UNIFORM BELONGS TO. *EOBARD THAWNE.*
WHAT KIND OF NAME IS "EOBARD"?
ONE FROM THE *FUTURE.*
HE'S A SCIENTIST FROM THE *25TH CENTURY* WHO BECAME OBSESSED WITH THE POWER I HAVE. HAD.
HE TURNED HIMSELF INTO HIS OWN ERA'S FASTEST MAN ALIVE BY REPLICATING THE ACCIDENT THAT TRANSFORMED ME INTO A LIVING KINETIC ENGINE.
HE CALLS HIMSELF *PROFESSOR ZOOM*-- THE *REVERSE-FLASH.*
THE *REVERSE-*FLASH? WHY WOULD *HIS* UNIFORM BE INSIDE *YOUR* RING?
AND HOW THE HELL DOES IT EVEN *FIT* IN THERE?


IT'S IN THERE BECAUSE THAWNE PUT IT THERE. HE WANTS ME TO KNOW HE'S BEHIND THIS.
HE'S *TAUNTING* ME. LIKE ALWAYS.
YOU'RE MORE PARANOID THAN THE JOKER. YOU BELONG IN ARKHAM.
I'M *NOT* CRAZY, DR. WAYNE.
THAWNE'S AS *FAST* AS I USED TO BE...AND HE CAN DO THINGS I NEVER COULD.
HE CAN *CHANGE* HISTORY.
MY MOTHER WAS *MURDERED* WHEN I WAS TEN AND MY FATHER WAS *CONVICTED* FOR IT.
I SPENT MY LIFE STUDYING FORENSICS TO PROVE HE WAS INNOCENT AND TO CATCH MY MOTHER'S REAL KILLER.
BUT MY FATHER DIED IN PRISON. AND I NEVER FOUND A SUSPECT.
UNTIL I BECAME THE FLASH. AND I DISCOVERED MY ENTIRE LIFE HAD BEEN TARGETED BY AN ENEMY I HADN'T EVEN MADE YET. IT WAS *REVENGE IN REVERSE.*
THAWNE CAN TRAVEL THROUGH TIME...
...HE WAS THE ONE THAT KILLED MY MOTHER.
BUT SHE'S *ALIVE* NOW.
THERE'S NO DOUBT THAWNE'S ALTERED HISTORY AGAIN.
EVERYTHING HAS GONE TO *HELL.* NO ONE'S EVER HEARD OF *SUPERMAN. AQUAMAN'S* AT WAR WITH *WONDER WOMAN*--
WHAT ABOUT BRUCE?


YOU CALLED ME BRUCE WHEN YOU CAME IN HERE.
THAT'S BECAUSE IN THE WORLD I KNOW, YOU WERE SHOT AND KILLED INSTEAD OF HIM. BRUCE BECAME BATMAN TO WAGE WAR AGAINST CRIME IN GOTHAM CITY.
BRUCE... SURVIVED?
YOUR SON WAS ONE OF MY CLOSEST FRIENDS.
IS ONE OF MY CLOSEST FRIENDS.
IF YOU'RE TELLING THE TRUTH, CAN YOU CHANGE THIS? CAN YOU CHANGE IT BACK SO THAT...
...I DIED AND BRUCE LIVED?
I NEED TO FIND THE REVERSE-FLASH, FIGURE OUT WHAT HE DID...
...AND FORCE HIM TO REVERT HISTORY TO WHAT IT WAS.
CAN YOU REALLY CHANGE THIS WORLD?
I HAVE TO. BUT FIRST THINGS FIRST, DR. WAYNE.
I NEED MY SPEED.


"BEFORE I FORGET EVERYTHING I EVER KNEW."
LONDON.
NEW THEMYSCIRA.
WHERE THE HELL ARE YOU?!
I'M AT THE RENDEZVOUS, BUT THERE'S NO SIGN OF YOU OR ANY OF THE OTHER MEMBERS OF THE RESISTANCE.
AND I'M UP TO MY NECK IN AMAZONS!
BRATTT
IF ANY OF YOU CAN HEAR ME, I NEED BACKUP IMMEDIATE--
I CAN TELL BY YOUR ACCENT YOU'RE AN AMERICAN.


BUT YOU'RE GOING TO TELL ME A LITTLE BIT MORE ABOUT YOURSELF.
WHO ARE YOU?

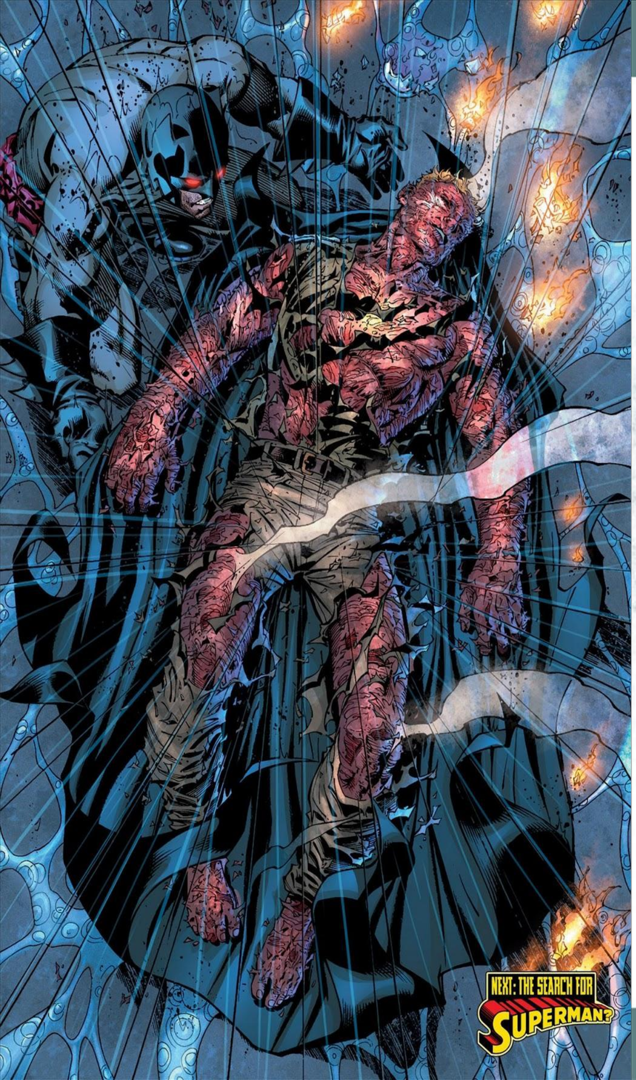

NNNGG.
AHHH!
HE'S RESISTING THE LASSO OF TRUTH.
HOW IS THAT POSSIBLE, QUEEN DIANA?
IT'S NOT.
WHO ARE YOU AND WHAT ARE YOU DOING IN NEW THEMYSCIRA?
M-MY...
M-MY NAME IS COLONEL STEVE TREVOR OF THE UNITED STATES SPECIAL FORCES.
I'M HERE TO FIND LOIS LANE.
WHO IS LOIS LANE?

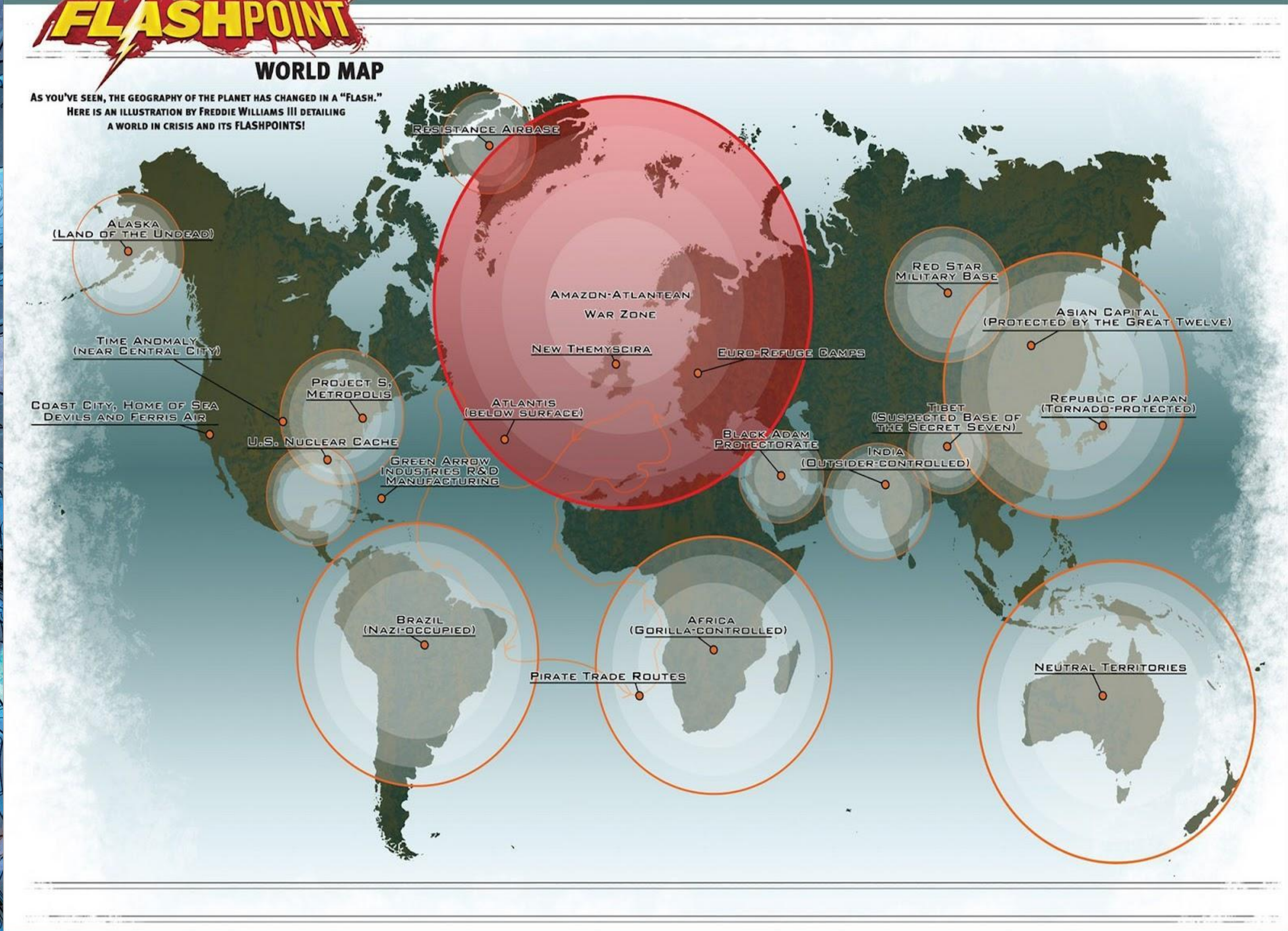

LOIS LANE IS A PULITZER-PRIZE-WINNING REPORTER, KNOWN FOR HER EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEWS WITH THE WORLD'S GREATEST S-SUPER-HUMANS.
SHE'S BEEN EMBEDDED IN NEW THEMYSCIRA FOR THE LAST EIGHT MONTHS, SECRETLY GATHERING INTEL ON YOU AND THE AMAZONS FOR CYBORG.
LANE KNOWS EVERY MOVE YOU'RE ABOUT TO MAKE. SHE REQUESTED EXTRACTION AND I VOLUNTEERED.
SH-SHE...SHE'S ALSO ONE OF THE MOST BEAUTIFUL WOMEN I'VE EVER MET.
OUR COUNTERSPY WAS TELLING THE TRUTH. CYBORG IS AMASSING THE OUTSIDE WORLD'S SUPER-HUMANS IN AN ATTEMPT TO INTERFERE WITH OUR WAR AGAINST AQUAMAN.
TELL OUR INSIDER SHE'S PROVEN HERSELF TO THE AMAZONS. SHE WILL BE WELCOME HERE IN THE NEW WORLD ORDER.
AND FIND ME THIS LOIS LANE.
WHAT DO YOU WISH US TO DO WITH STEVE TREVOR?


WHERE'S THE NINHYDRIN?
YOU'RE CRAZY.
FINE. BUT WHERE IS IT?
TO YOUR RIGHT.
DOUSING YOURSELF WITH CHEMICALS AND PLUGGING INTO A LIGHTNING ROD IS GOING TO TURN YOU INTO "THE FASTEST MAN ALIVE"?
THEY SAY LIGHTNING NEVER STRIKES THE SAME PLACE TWICE.
THAT'S HOW I BECAME THE FLASH THE FIRST TIME.
"THEY" SAY A LOT OF THINGS.
NOW WHY DON'T WE PULL THE SWITCH AND FIND OUT.


WHRR-WHRR
WHRR-WHRR
COME ON. I'M HERE.
I'M RIGHT--


KAZZAATTT
AAAAHHH!!
BWOOOSHHH


NEXT: THE SEARCH FOR
SUPERMAN?


FLASHPOINT
WORLD MAP
As you've seen, the geography of the planet has changed in a "Flash." Here is an illustration by Freddie Williams III detailing a world in crisis and its FLASHPOINTS!
Resistance Airbase
Alaska (Land of the Undead)
Amazon-Atlantean War Zone
New Themyscira
Euro-Refuge Camps
Red Star Military Base
Asian Capital (Protected by the Great Twelve)
Time Anomaly (near Central City)
Project S, Metropolis
Coast City, Home of Sea Devils and Ferris Air
U.S. Nuclear Cache
Green Arrow Industries R&D Manufacturing
Atlantis (below surface)
Black Adam Protectorate
Tibet (Suspected Base of the Secret Seven)
Republic of Japan (Tornado-Protected)
India (Outsider-controlled)
Brazil (Nazi-occupied)
Africa (Gorilla-controlled)
Pirate Trade Routes
Neutral Territories

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FLASHPOINT

The Flash - Barry Allen

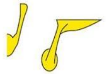
Designed by Andy Kubert
June 4, 2010

Character Design Notes:

Cowl:
- See side wing detail



Boots:
- Thick boots with no tapering and wrinkles at ankles
- Boot wing detail matches cowl without disks



Gloves:
- Wears gold Flash ring on right hand.

Colors:
- Standard Flash red and yellow.

Chest logo
- Graphic Representation of chest logo









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WHAT FOLLOWS ARE THE SUPER-SECRET CHARACTER DESIGNS THAT ARTIST ANDY KUBERT CAME UP WITH FOR THE VARIATIONS ON OUR FAMILIAR DCU HEROES IN FLASHPOINT. HE AND WRITER GEOFF JOHNS HAD MANY LENGTHY DISCUSSIONS ABOUT HOW THINGS WOULD CHANGE--SOME NOT VERY MUCH, OTHERS DRASTICALLY.

NOTE THAT THROUGHOUT THE FLASH'S ICONIC "LIGHTNING IN A CIRCLE" IS ECHOED IN THE OTHER CHARACTERS SYMBOLS AS WELL, THE CIRCLE REPRESENTING BOTH WHAT BRINGS EVERYONE TOGETHER AND ALSO THE ENDLESS CHAOS THEY ARE LOOPED IN.

FOR YOUR EYES ONLY

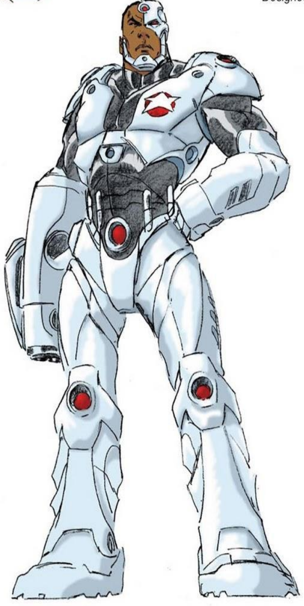
FLASHPOINT

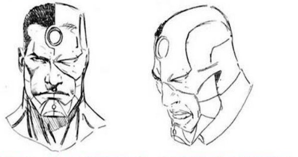
Cyborg - Victor Stone

Designed by Andy Kubert
July 13, 2010

Character Design Notes:

- Lower jaw is all metal
- All metal parts are shiny chrome
- Black part of body suit is gloss black
- Robot lower arms can be outfitted with weapons as needed





Concept of chest logo discarded



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FLASHPOINT

Batman · Thomas Wayne

Designed by Andy Kubert
May 19, 2010

Character Design Notes:

Cowl:
- Note ear shape profile
- Stubble on chin
- Mouth opening in cowl is very narrow

Boots:
- Thick boots with no tapering down to ankles

Cape:
- Attaches to back of arm from above elbow to shoulder points
- Five scallop points at bottom

Gloves:
- Lower two scallops can be removed and used as a weapon
- Topmost scallop is fixed and used as "knife" weapon

Colors:
- Belt, eyes and circle behind chest logo are a dark dusty red
- Body suit is gray
- Cape, cowl, gloves and boots are intended to be gloss black, highlights rendered in white, not blue.





Graphic Representation of chest logo









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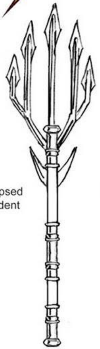
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FLASHPOINT

Aquaman - Arthur Curry

Designed by Andy Kubert
July 13, 2010



Collapsed Trident



Character Design Notes:

- Military rank noted in "pips" on chest strap
- Trident attaches to strap on back, handle extends
- Scars on nose and chin
- Squared jawed & serious
- short military haircut, sides are shaved close.



Graphic Representation of chest logo

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FLASHPOINT

Wonder Woman · Ruler of Paradise Island

Designed by Andy Kubert
June 4, 2010

Character Design Notes:

- Metal helmet and shoulder guards
- Note distressing and wear on helmet
- Metal arm bands
- Black leather gloves with deep blue highlights
- Black chain mail on body (chest, arms, legs) under armor, blue highlight
- Note stars on belt
- White cape attaches to underside of shoulder guards in back



Graphic Representation of chest logo



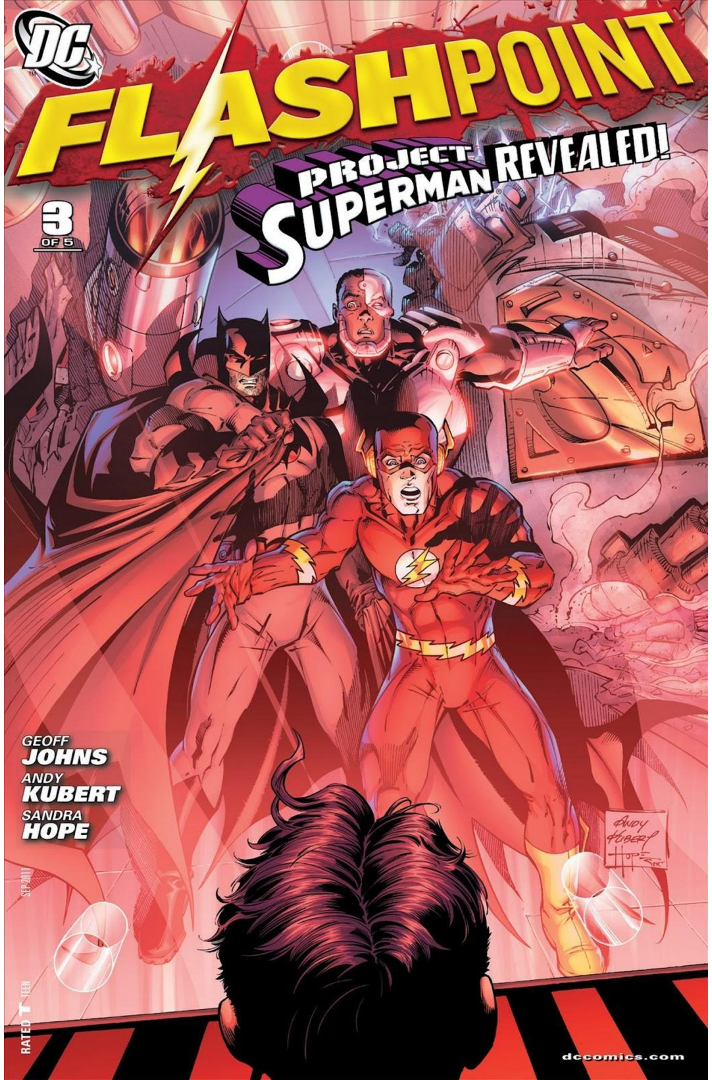


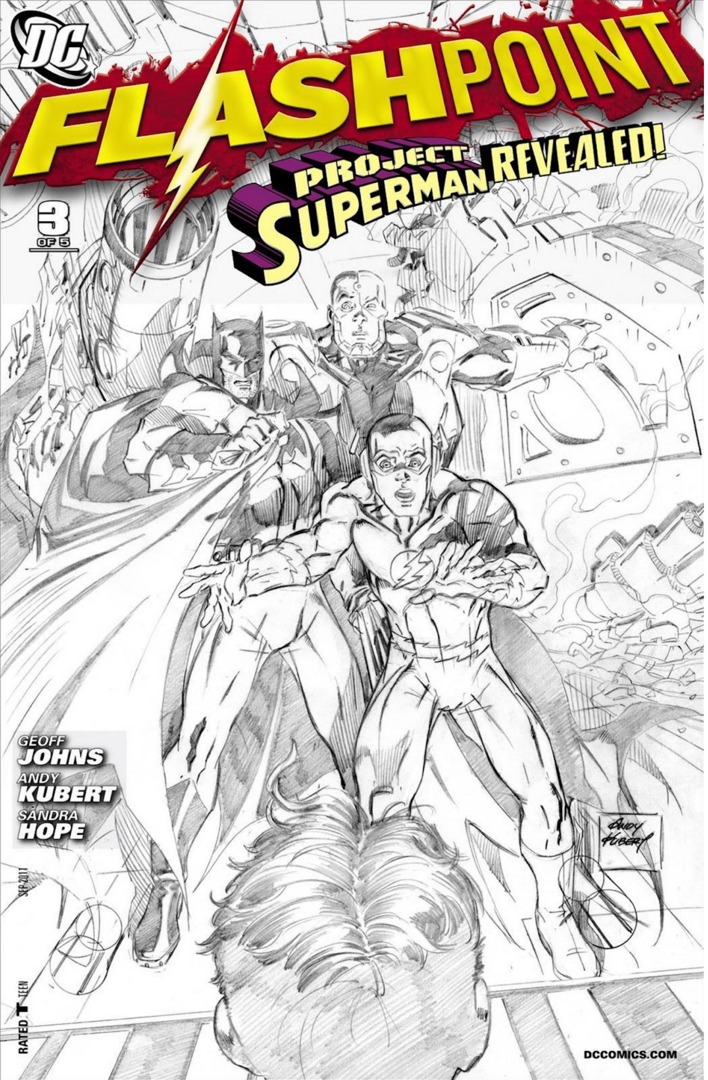
Tiara Detail

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GEOFF JOHNS • ANDY KUBERT
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EVERYTHING YOU KNOW WILL CHANGE IN A FLASH.
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FLASHPOINT
PROJECT SUPERMAN REVEALED!
3 OF 5
GEOFF JOHNS
ANDY KUBERT
SANDRA HOPE
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ROD REIS
RATED T TEEN
SEP 2011
GEOFF JOHNS
ANDY KUBERT
SANDRA HOPE



I HAVE TO SEND IN THE TRUE HEROES.
I JUST NEED A LITTLE MORE TIME, MR. PRESIDENT.
DETROIT. The Industrial Headquarters of Cyborg.
I CAN'T GIVE IT TO YOU.
BUT, SIR--
VICTOR, YOU DID YOUR BEST TRYING TO RECRUIT THE SUPER-HUMAN COMMUNITY TO BREAK UP AQUAMAN AND WONDER WOMAN'S TUG-OF-WAR WITH THE WORLD, BUT AMERICA LOST ONE OF ITS BEST SOLDIERS TODAY.
COLONEL STEVE TREVOR'S SIGNAL JUST WENT DEAD AND THE RESISTANCE OVER THERE NEVER GOT TREVOR'S MESSAGE.
SOMEONE INTERCEPTED IT BEFORE IT WENT OUT. WHICH POINTS TO A TRAITOR AMONG THOSE YOU'VE LOOPED IN.
MY GUESS WOULD BE THE OUTSIDER. HE'S HAD HIS EYE ON TEARING THIS COUNTRY APART FOR YEARS.
I DON'T THINK SO, SIR. THE OUTSIDER IS MOTIVATED BY MONEY, NOTHING ELSE.
REGARDLESS, YOU'RE THE ONLY SUPER-HUMAN THE PUBLIC TRUSTS, VICTOR. THE ONLY ONE I TRUST.
I APPRECIATE YOUR EFFORTS TRYING TO RALLY YOUR TROOPS, BUT AMERICA CAN'T WAIT ANY LONGER.
THE U.S. MILITARY WON'T STAND A CHANCE--
AND THE WORLD WON'T EITHER IF I JUST SIT HERE AND HOPE PEOPLE LIKE BATMAN WILL COME TO THEIR SENSES.
ESPECIALLY IF YOU HAVE SOMEONE ON THE INSIDE WORKING AGAINST YOU.
THANK YOU FOR EVERYTHING YOU'VE DONE FOR THIS COUNTRY--



"--BUT YOU'RE RELIEVED FROM DUTY."
FLASHPOINT CHAPTER THREE OF FIVE:
Geoff Johns-WRITER Andy Kubert-PENCILLER
Sandra Hope-INKER Alex Sinclair-COLORIST Nick J. Napolitano-LETTERER
Cover by Andy Kubert, Sandra Hope & Alex Sinclair
Variant Cover by Ivan Reis, George Pérez, & Rod Reis
Kate Stewart-ASST. EDITOR Rex Ogle-ASSOC. EDITOR Eddie Berganza-EXECUTIVE EDITOR


WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU DOING?
NEED TO...
I NEED TO...TRY AGAIN.
I JUST NEED...A BIGGER BOLT OF LIGHTNING.
YOU'RE OUT OF YOUR MIND.
LIE DOWN AND LET THE MORPHINE TAKE EFFECT.
N-NO.
YOU'RE LUCKY TO BE ALIVE. YOU HAVE THIRD DEGREE BURNS OVER SEVENTY-FIVE PERCENT OF YOUR BODY.
DOESN'T... MATTER. I HAVE TO TRY AGAIN.
I CAN'T FORGET.
FORGET WHAT?


AAAAHHHHHHH!
...INTRODUCE THE WORLD TO OUR ALIEN ALLY ABIN SUR, A MEMBER OF AN INTERGALACTIC POLICE FORCE KNOWN AS THE GREEN LANTERN CORPS!
WHAT ABOUT THAT NICE GIRL IN YOUR LAB, BARRY? PATTY, IS IT? YOU TWO HAVE SO MUCH IN COMMON.
I'M JUST NOT HER TYPE, MOM.
YOU SAY THAT ABOUT EVERYONE.
I'VE BEEN ASKING FOR YEARS ABOUT WHY THAT BRIDGE OUT OF CENTRAL CITY LEADS TO NOWHERE, BUT NO ONE KNOWS, ALLEN.
OR NO ONE REMEMBERS.
MY MEMORIES KEEP CH-CHANGING. REALIGNING WITH THIS NEW HISTORY THE REVERSE-FLASH C-CREATED BY ALTERING TIME.
IF WE DON'T FIX THIS SOON--KKKFF--I WON'T EVEN REALIZE IT'S WRONG.
JUST LIKE THAWNE MADE ME FORGET THE LIFE I HAD BEFORE HE WENT BACK IN TIME AND MURDERED MY MOTHER... I WON'T REMEMBER MY WIFE...
...OR YOUR SON.
"PLEASE, DR. WAYNE."


"HELP ME BACK TO THE ROOF."
KRA-KOOOOMM
K'REEEK
NNNGG.
KRA-KOOOOMM
YOU REALLY ARE CRAZY.
LIKE A FOX.
NOW GET ME BACK IN--


KRA-KOOOOMM




KRA
TOLD YOU.


NEW THEMYSCIRA.
Formerly known as the United Kingdom.
"THIS IS LOIS LANE OF THE DAILY PLANET."
I'M NOT SURE IF YOU'RE GOING TO RECEIVE THIS, CYBORG, BUT MY BATTERY LIFE IS ABOUT TO DIE AND WHEN THE AMAZONS CATCH UP WITH ME... I'LL BE JOINING IT.
WAY OUT
NORTHERN LINES
WORD HAS IT; THEY DRAGGED AN ATLANTEAN FROM THE SEA YESTERADY. WONDER WOMAN'S LASSO MADE HIM TALK.
AQUAMAN IS LEADING HIS ARMY THROUGH THE ENGLISH CHANNEL; MASSING FOR AN ALL-OUT ATTACK TOMORROW.
TOMORROW IS IT. TOMORROW IS THE FINAL BATTLE.
IF I CAN'T FIND THE RESISTANCE BY THEN--
DOWN HERE I HEARD YOUR LOVELY BREATH AND WONDERED IF IT BROUGHT US DEATH!
WHO'S THERE?
DON'T MIND OUR GOLDEN BOY. HE LIKES TO THINK HIMSELF A BIT OF A POET.
WHAT?
HELL OF A DAY TO SAVE THE WORLD, HUH, MISS LANE?


NAME'S GRIFTER.
WELCOME TO THE RESISTANCE!


YOUR BURNS ARE *HEALING.* SLOWLY, BUT THEY ARE.
I'VE NEVER SEEN ANYTHING LIKE IT.
MY SPEED HEIGHTENS EVERYTHING, INCLUDING MY REPARATIVE FUNCTIONS, BUT IT'S GOING TO BE A WHILE UNTIL I CAN SHIFT INTO HIGH GEAR.
THIS MIGHT PROVE YOU ARE THE FASTEST MAN ALIVE, BUT IT DOESN'T PROVE YOUR STORY.
IT HAS TO COUNT FOR *SOMETHING.*
HERE. YOU NEED A SUIT, AND I'M NOT ABOUT TO LEND YOU ONE OF MINE.
WHAT?
IT'S FRICTIONPROOF, ISN'T IT?
FORGET IT.
THEORETICALLY, I COULD TRY TO UNWEAVE IT, BREAK DOWN THE THREADS TO NEAR INFINITY AND ALTER ITS COLOR.
BUT WITH THE CHEMICALS AND MATERIALS IN THE MANOR, IT'S EASIER TO MAKE A NEW ONE.
FZZZZSSSSHHH


THAT'S BETTER.


"NOW LET'S GET TO WORK."
IS THIS THE ONLY COMPUTER YOU HAVE?
YES.
IF THIS REVERSE-FLASH HAS THE SAME POWERS AS YOU, HOW IS HE ABLE TO ALTER HISTORY AND YOU'RE NOT?
SIMPLE SCIENCE: FOR EVERY *POSITIVE* THERE IS A *NEGATIVE*.
NOT SO SIMPLE SCIENCE: THAWNE IS POWERED BY A NEGATIVE SPEED FORCE. ONE HE CREATES BY CORRUPTING THE SPEED FORCE ENERGY I GENERATE.
THE NEGATIVE SPEED FORCE GIVES HIM A VARIETY OF ABILITIES I DON'T HAVE: HE CAN MANIPULATE HIS OWN AGE, DETERIORATE OBJECTS WITH A TOUCH--
--AND HE CAN CHANGE THE PAST.
THIS IS TAKING FOREVER TO BOOT UP.
BUT YOU CAN TRAVEL THROUGH TIME?
NORMALLY, YES, IF MY POWERS ARE AT THEIR FULL CAPACITY, BUT LIKE I SAID IT'S GOING TO TAKE ME SOME TIME TO GET UP TO SPEED.
THEN WHY CAN'T YOU ALTER HISTORY?
TRYING TO ALTER ANYTHING IN THE PAST IS LIKE TRYING TO SWIM UP A WATERFALL. THE CURRENT OF TIME FIGHTS AGAINST IT. AND RIGHTLY SO.
MMMRRR.
THAT'S THE BATMAN "*MMMRRR*" FOR SAYING SOMETHING WITHOUT SAYING SOMETHING. YOUR SON DID IT TOO. WHAT IS IT?.
IT SOUNDS LIKE YOU'RE HOLDING YOURSELF BACK. LIKE YOU HAVEN'T REALLY *TRIED*--
BECAUSE IT'S DANGEROUS, DR. WAYNE.
ONE SMALL, SEEMINGLY MEANINGLESS EVENT CAN TOPPLE OVER A ROW OF DOMINOES.
LIKE A ROCK THROWN THROUGH A WINDSHIELD, IT CAN LEAVE CRACKS THROUGHOUT HISTORY.
THE BUTTERFLY EFFECT.
YES.
BUT IN THIS CASE THERE'S TOO MUCH THAT'S ALTERED AROUND THE PEOPLE CLOSEST TO ME.
IT HAS TO BE ORCHESTRATED. *MULTIPLE* ATTACKS ON THE HISTORY OF MY FRIENDS AND ALLIES.
WITHOUT ANY OTHER SPEEDSTERS OUT THERE, THAWNE KNEW THE FIRST THING I WOULD DO WAS TRY TO REASSEMBLE THE JUSTICE LEAGUE.
SO HE TOOK THEM OUT OF THE EQUATION.
OR *TRIED* TO.


THE MEMORIES I HAVE OF *THIS* TIMELINE ARE FUZZY, BUT I SAW AN IMAGE OF ABIN SUR AS GREEN LANTERN.
THE ALIEN.
IF ABIN SUR IS STILL ALIVE, IT MEANS HE NEVER PASSED HIS RING ON TO HAL JORDAN.
CAPTAIN HAL "*HIGHBALL*" JORDAN? A TEST PILOT FOR FERRIS AIR?
AND STILL NOT MARRIED TO CAROL.
WITHOUT HIS POWER RING, I'D BE PUTTING HAL IN DANGER.
Coast City Gazett
CONTROVERSIAL PILOT ELEVATES EXPERIMENTAL AIRPLANE TO NEW HEIGHTS
FERRIS STO RISES
SO WE MOVE ON TO THE BIG GUY. *SUPERMAN.* THE *SOLE SURVIVOR* OF A PLANET CALLED KRYPTON.
HE'S THE *MOST POWERFUL* BEING ON *EARTH.*
THE ROCKET THAT BROUGHT HIM HERE WOULD'VE LANDED AROUND THE SAME TIME BRUCE WAS BORN.
A ROCKET STRUCK METROPOLIS WHEN MARTHA WAS PREGNANT WITH BRUCE. IT DESTROYED A DOZEN CITY BLOCKS.
MY GOD... HOW MANY PEOPLE--?
THIRTY-FIVE THOUSAND.
NO ONE EVER TOOK CREDIT FOR THE ATTACK, BUT THE GOVERNMENT CLAIMED IT WAS FROM A TERRORIST CELL IN SOUTH AMERICA. THAT'S WHY THE U.S. INVADED--
WHAT HAPPENED TO THE ROCKET?
DAILY PLANET
METROPOLIS ATTACKED!
I DON'T KNOW.
BUT I KNOW SOMEONE WHO CAN FIND OUT.


I HAVE TO ADMIT, I DIDN'T EXPECT YOUR CALL.
VIC? YOU LOOK...BROADER. TALLER.
MY NAME IS BARRY ALLEN, BUT--
HAVE WE MET?
YOU'VE NEVER MET.
HE'S... NEW TO GOTHAM. SUPER-SPEED. GOES BY THE NAME THE FLASH.
WHAT DO YOU WANT?
YOU STILL NEED A STRATEGIST FOR YOUR ARMY? SOMEONE TO GET EVERYONE ELSE TO JOIN THE FIGHT AGAINST AQUAMAN AND WONDER WOMAN?
...YES.
I'M IN.
WHAT? YOU'RE--?
BUT WE BUILD THE ARMY MY WAY. WITH SOLDIERS OF MY CHOOSING. STARTING WITH THE FLASH.
THE NEXT PERSON ON MY LIST CAME OUT OF THE ROCKET THAT DESTROYED METROPOLIS.
WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?
CLASSIFIED INFORMATION. YOU'RE THE ONLY PERSON I KNOW WHO CAN GAIN ACCESS TO IT.
ME?
YOU DON'T EVEN REALIZE IT, DO YOU?

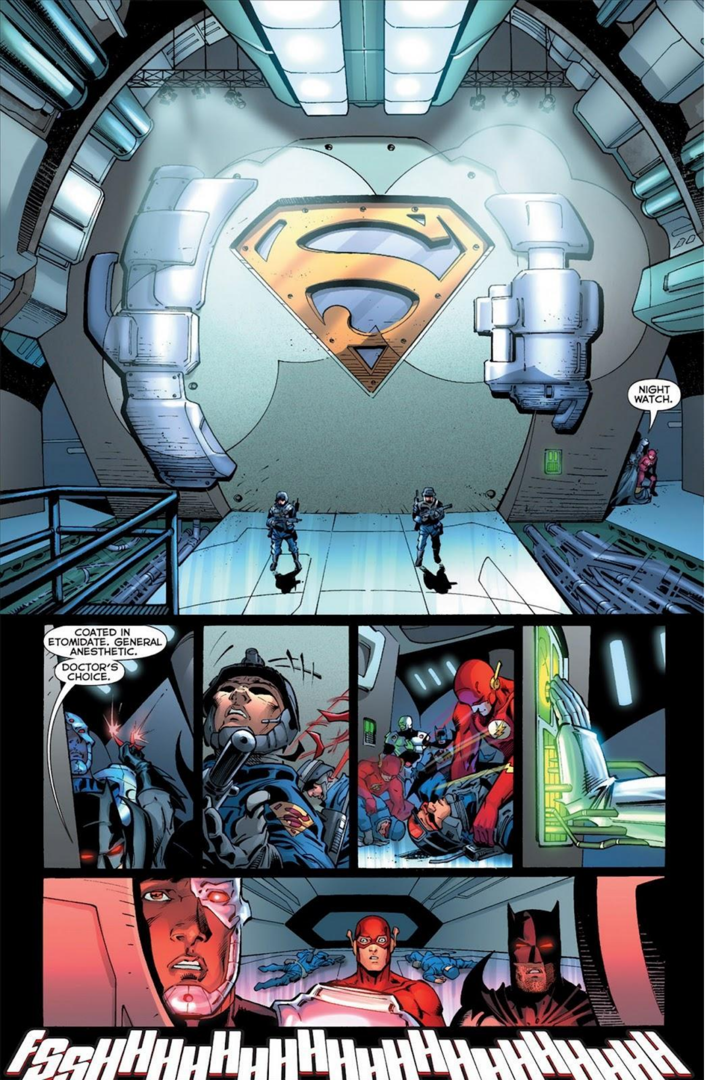

YOU COULD BE THE SINGLE MOST POWERFUL SOURCE OF INFORMATION ON THE PLANET.
A PHYSICAL AND DIGITAL TANK.
THERE'S NOT A BRICK WALL OR A FIREWALL ON EARTH THAT CAN KEEP CYBORG OUT.
YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT HACKING INTO GOVERNMENT SYSTEMS, BATMAN. I DON'T HACK INTO GOVERNMENT SYSTEMS.
THIS IS THE DEAL. THIS IS THE PRICE FOR MY SIGNING UP.
FIRST, I WANT TO KNOW WHAT THE HELL MADE YOU CHANGE YOUR MIND?
DOES IT MATTER?
I'LL SEE WHAT I CAN DO.
WHAT ARE YOU DOING?
GETTING THE INFORMATION WE NEED.
YOU'RE LYING TO HIM, DR. WAYNE.
WE SHOULD TELL HIM WHAT WE'RE REALLY UP TO. HE COULD HELP--
STOP BEING SO DAMN NAIVE, ALLEN. YOU THINK CYBORG WILL BELIEVE YOU? YOU THINK HE'LL ABANDON THIS CRUSADE OF HIS AND JOIN OURS, AS INSANE AS IT SOUNDS? AS IT IS?
IT'S EASIER THIS WAY. IT'S FASTER.
AND AFTER YOU "FIX" WHATEVER YOUR ENEMY DID, NONE OF THIS WILL MATTER ANYWAY, WILL IT?
DID IT EVER MATTER TO YOU?
ACCORDING TO GOVERNMENT FILES, THE ROCKET WAS TAKEN AND TRANSFERRED TO A SECRET UNDERGROUND FACILITY UNDERNEATH METROPOLIS CALLED PROJECT: SUPERMAN.
AND THERE IS A REPORT, MOSTLY DESTROYED, THAT THEY FOUND SOMETHING INSIDE THE ROCKET. THEY CALLED IT SUBJECT 1.
HOW THE HELL DID YOU KNOW ABOUT THIS?
THAT ALSO DOESN'T MATTER. NOW ARE YOU GOING TO TELL US HOW TO GET INTO PROJECT: SUPERMAN OR NOT?
ONE STEP BETTER, BATMAN...



"I'M COMING WITH YOU."
NEW METROPOLIS.
THE DAILY
WHICH WAY?
JUST FOLLOW ME. I'VE DOWNLOADED THE SCHEMATICS OF PROJECT: SUPERMAN. IT'S A MULTI-LEVEL FACILITY TWO MILES UNDERGROUND.
REDESIGNED TO STUDY SUBJECT 1 AND APPARENTLY TWO *OTHER* ROCKETS THAT LANDED ON EARTH SUBSEQUENTLY. SUBJECT 2 AND SUBJECT 3.
WHAT KIND OF SECURITY ARE WE TALKING ABOUT?
THE KIND WE WANT TO AVOID.
AHH.
YOU ALL RIGHT?
JUST *OLD.*



I'M CYCLING THEIR MOTION SENSORS AND SECURITY CAMERAS, BUT THE LOOP WON'T GO UNNOTICED FOR LONG.
THERE'S A SKELETON CREW WORKING THIS LATE AT NIGHT. SO WE SHOULD BE ABLE TO MOVE THROUGH THE HALLS FAIRLY FREELY.
BATMAN, I DON'T KNOW *WHAT* CHANGED YOUR MIND OR *WHY...*
...BUT THANK YOU.
WITH YOU ON BOARD, EVERYONE ELSE WILL BE TOO. WE CAN SAVE THE WORLD FROM WAR.
AND I'LL FINALLY MAKE MY DAD PROUD.
WE'RE GETTING CLOSE.
SUBJECT 2... MY GOD...
IT LOOKS LIKE A CANINE SKELETON.


NIGHT WATCH.
COATED IN ETOMIDATE. GENERAL ANESTHETIC.
DOCTOR'S CHOICE.
FSSHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHH


THIS IS THE MOST POWERFUL BEING ON THE PLANET?


RANKK RANKK RANKK RANNKK
COVER YOUR EARS.
KLANK WUNK KLAK
THAT SUBSONIC BLAST HURT HIM, FLASH. I THOUGHT YOU SAID--
HIS SKIN...IT'S SO PALE.
I DON'T THINK HE'S EVER SEEN THE SUN.
HE'S ACTING LIKE HE'S NEVER SEEN A HUMAN.
HEY!


IS THAT CYBORG?
WHAT'S HE DOING--?
WE'VE GOT COMPANY!
ARE YOU SURE ABOUT THIS, ALLEN?
WHAT IF HE WAS KEPT IMPRISONED FOR A REASON?
I KNOW HIM, DR. WAYNE.
AND I CAN SAY WITH ALL CONFIDENCE THAT NO MATTER WHERE HE WAS RAISED, HE'S A GOOD PERSON.
GET GENERAL ADAM ON THE LINE! SUBJECT 1 IS OUT!
REPEAT, SUBJECT 1 IS OUT!
WE'RE NOT HERE TO HURT YOU, SUPERMAN.
WE'RE YOUR FRIENDS.
AND WE'RE GOING TO GET YOU OUT OF HERE, OKAY?
OKAY.


KLANGG
BLAMM
BLAMM
BLAMM
BLAMM
BLAMM
KKKLANGG


BEAUTIFUL.
MY GOD.
HE'S FLYING.
GENERAL LANE WANTS SUBJECT 1 ALIVE, THE OTHERS--
--SHOOT TO KILL!
AAAARHHH!
VZZ


WHAT ARE YOU WAITING FOR?
GET THEM!
THERE GOES YOUR BIG SAVIOR.


CHAK
SO WHAT NOW?
NEXT: S.H.A.Z.A.M!

FOR YOUR EYES ONLY

Subject 1 - Superman

Designed by Andy Kubert
July 14, 2010

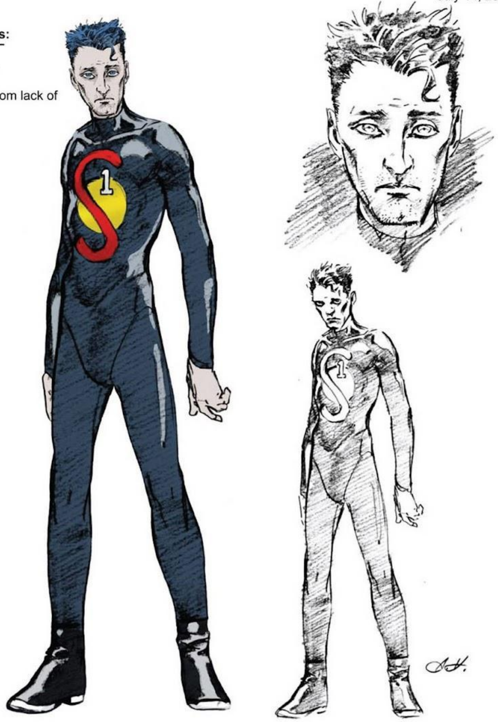
Character Design Notes:

-Hair curt short on sides

-Very drawn, tired look from lack of sun exposure

-Razor stubble on chin

-Thin eyebrows





Graphic Representation of chest logo

CONFIDENTIAL · FINAL DESIGN · CONFIDENTIAL · FINAL DESIGN

WHAT FOLLOWS ARE THE SUPER-SECRET CHARACTER DESIGNS THAT ARTIST ANDY KUBERT CAME UP WITH FOR THE VARIATIONS ON OUR FAMILIAR DCU HEROES IN FLASHPOINT. HE AND WRITER GEOFF JOHNS HAD MANY LONG DISCUSSIONS ABOUT HOW THINGS WOULD CHANGE--SOME NOT VERY MUCH, OTHERS DRASTICALLY, AND OTHERS WOULD BE ALL-NEW CONCEPTS.

FOR YOUR EYES ONLY

Lady Godiva

Designed by Andy Kubert
2010

Character Design Notes:

Collar:
-Black with circle design

Body Suit and Coat:
-White

Gloves:
-Black (matches skirt)

Skirt:
-Open in front

Boots:
-Circle design on the sides

Hair:
-A lot of long/snakelike blonde locks



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FOR YOUR EYES ONLY

FOR YOUR EYES ONLY

FLASHPOINT

Mrs. Hyde

Designed by Andy Kubert
2010

Character Design Notes:

Skin:
-Pale, grayish

Eyes:
-Deep blue

Lips:
-Bright red

Hair:
-Pulled back/short, cropped in back

-Squarish jaw

Cape:
-Black / Victorian with embroidery

Suit:
-White dress suit with loosened neck tie

Gloves:
-Short black gloves

Boots:
-Short black boots



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FOR YOUR EYES ONLY

FOR YOUR EYES ONLY

FLASHPOINT

Canterbury Cricket

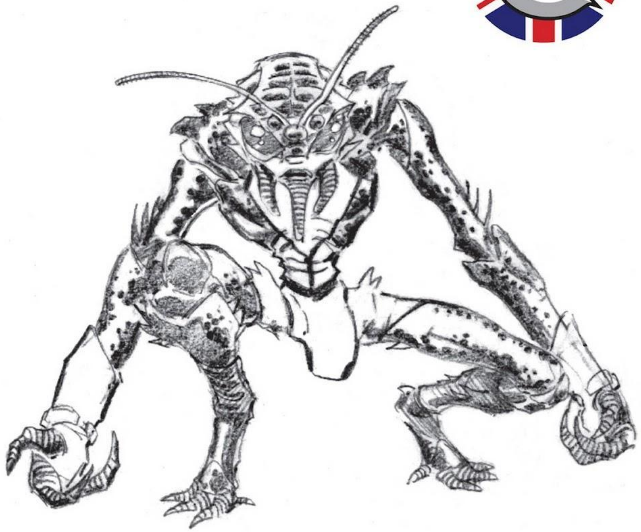
Designed by Andy Kubert
2010

Character Design Notes:

-Hard exoskeleton

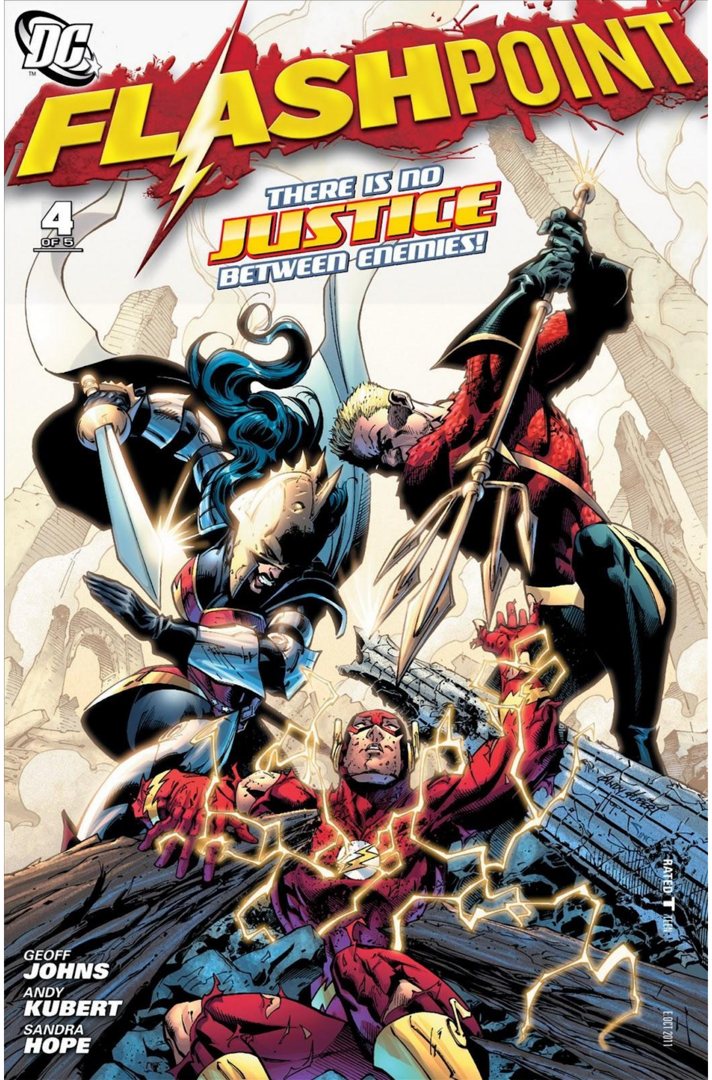
-Metal wrist guards

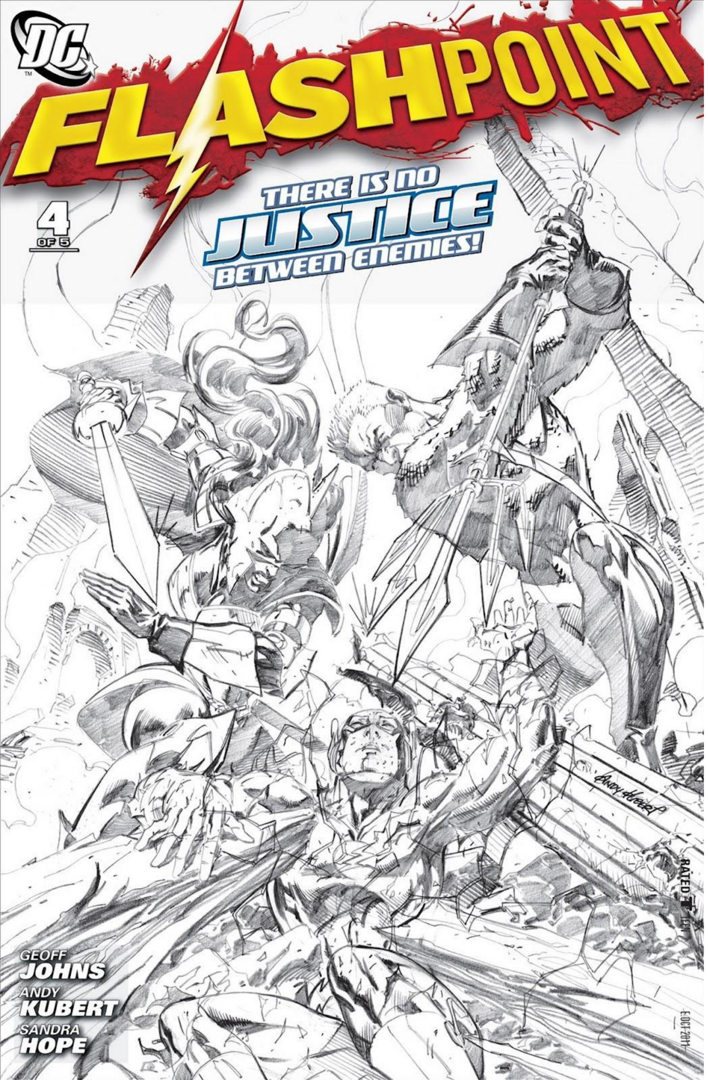
-Uniform covers his main torso



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FOR YOUR EYES ONLY


FLASHPOINT
4
OF 5
THERE IS NO
JUSTICE
BETWEEN ENEMIES!
GEOFF
JOHNS
ANDY
KUBERT
SANDRA
HOPE


DC
FLASHPOINT
4
OF 5
THERE IS NO JUSTICE BETWEEN ENEMIES!
GEOFF JOHNS
ANDY KUBERT
SANDRA HOPE


FAWCETT CITY.
OUR WORLD IS IN A VIOLENT TRANSITION OF GREAT CHANGE.
I KNOW THE NUMBER OF HUMAN LIVES LOST DUE TO THE ACTIONS OF AQUAMAN AND WONDER WOMAN IS BEYOND COMPREHENSION.
LIKE MANY OF YOU, I HELD OUT HOPE THAT THE SUPER-HUMANS OF THE WORLD WOULD GATHER TOGETHER AND PUT A STOP TO THE CONFLICT BETWEEN ATLANTIS AND THE AMAZONS.
BUT THAT HOPE WAS MISPLACED. THOSE WITH SUPER-POWERS HAVE FAILED TO ORGANIZE IN ANY MEANINGFUL WAY.
BILLY, WHAT DO WE DO?
WHAT DO WE DO? WE DON'T DO ANYTHING, MARY! WE'RE JUST A BUNCH OF KIDS!
TECHNICALLY, YES, FREDDY, BUT WE'RE KIDS WITH THE POWERS OF THE GODS.
BUT REMEMBER WHAT HAPPENED LAST TIME CAPTAIN THUNDER MET WONDER WOMAN, EUGENE?
I REMEMBER! WE ALMOST DIED.
MY FELLOW AMERICANS, WE CAN NO LONGER STAND BY AND WAIT FOR ANYONE TO SAVE US.


"WE'RE GOING TO HAVE TO FIGHT THIS WAR OURSELVES."
COAST CITY.
HOPE SHE'S READY TO FLY, HECTOR.
SHE IS, THANKS TO ME. IN LESS THAN TWENTY-FOUR HOURS, I MANAGED TO REDESIGN THE F-35, SHEDDING OVER FOURTEEN HUNDRED POUNDS AND THUS ENABLING IT TO CARRY THIS OVERZEALOUS STRIKE MISSILE.
THE "GREEN ARROW." THEY SAY IT ALWAYS HITS ITS TARGET.
GOD BLESS QUEEN INDUSTRIES.
AND YOU, HECTOR. YOU'RE A GENIUS.
AND YOU'RE AN IDIOT, HAL. THE WORLD IS ON THE VERGE OF SELF-DESTRUCTION, YOU'RE ABOUT TO FLY INTO ENEMY TERRITORY AND DROP THE BOMB...
AND YET YOU STILL HAVE THAT SAME OLD SMUG SMILE PLASTERED ACROSS YOUR FACE.
YOU THINK I DON'T KNOW HOW HIGH THE STAKES ARE, HECTOR?
YOU THINK AFTER ALL THAT'S HAPPENED I'M NOT WORRIED ABOUT MYSELF OR CAROL OR THE REST OF THE WORLD? I'M TERRIFIED. BUT I FOCUS ON THAT AND I WON'T GET IN THE COCKPIT.
I FOCUS ON THAT AND I'LL GO HIDE IN THE SHADOWS LIKE ALL THOSE "SUPER-HEROES."
THAT'S NOT ME.
NO MATTER WHAT.
HAL
"Highball"
JORDAN
HAL.
GOOD LUCK.
"WE CAN'T BEAT THEM."


METROPOLIS.
THIS SECURITY FORCE IS ARMED WITH WEAPONS DESIGNED TO TAKE OUT THAT ALIEN WHO LEFT US HIGH AND DRY.
SUPERMAN WILL COME BACK. HE HAS TO.
WHOEVER YOU THINK "SUPERMAN" IS, FLASH, HE'S NOT. HE FLEW AWAY LIKE A FRIGHTENED CHILD.
KRAK
I JUST NEED A FEW MORE SECONDS TO BREAK INTO THEIR SYSTEM AND I CAN SHUT THEIR SUITS DOWN.
NO NEED, CYBORG, I CAN DISARM THEM QUICKER THAN--
WE HAVE CLEARANCE TO USE LETHAL FORCE, SO USE IT!
ARRGHHH!
FSSSSSSSSSS
GAS? WHAT ARE YOU DOUSING THEM WITH, BATMAN?
IT'S NOT ME.
BWOOOSHHH
A TIDAL WAVE! WHERE--GGG!
SMELLS LIKE CHALK DUST, I KNOW. SORRY! IT ALWAYS HAPPENS WHEN I'M TRANS-MUTING.
IT'S SO EMBARRASSING.
KRRAKAKAK
WHAT IS THAT? METAMORPHO?


MY NAME'S EMILY SUNG, BUT MY TOP SECRET CODE NAME IS
ELEMENT WOMAN
ANYONE WANT A JUICE BOX? I BROUGHT EXTRA.
FLASHPOINT
PART FOUR OF FIVE
Geoff Johns-WRITER • Andy Kubert-PENCILLER
Jesse Delperdang-INKER • Alex Sinclair-COLORIST • Nick J. Napolitano-Letterer
COVER BY Andy Kubert, Sandra Hope & Alex Sinclair • VARIANT COVER BY Rags Morales & Nei Rufino
Kate Stewart & Rex Ogle-EDITORS • Eddie Berganza EXECUTIVE EDITOR


I LOVE YOUR UNIFORM! IT'S SO...RED!
UH... THANKS.
GREAT. ELEMENT WOMAN'S COME TO SAVE THE DAY. SHE'S AS CERTIFIABLE AS EVERYONE IN ARKHAM.
SHE'S NOT CRAZY, BATMAN. SHE'S JUST NOT USED TO BEING AROUND PEOPLE.
AND I'M NOT USED TO ELEMENT WOMEN COINCIDENTALLY SHOWING UP OUT OF THE BLUE.
WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE, MISS SUNG?
WELL, I, UH...I'VE KINDA BEEN FOLLOWING CYBORG AROUND.
WHAT?
DON'T GET MAD! AFTER YOU GOT EVERYONE TOGETHER IN GOTHAM AND NO ONE WANTED TO PUT A STOP TO THE WAR I... I COULDN'T UNDER-STAND IT.
THINGS ARE BAD OUT THERE. PEOPLE ARE GETTING HURT. WE SHOULD HELP AND...
NO ONE EVER ASKED ME TO JOIN A TEAM BEFORE.
IF WE CAN'T GET SUPERMAN TO HELP US FIND THE REVERSE-FLASH, WE MIGHT HAVE TO RECRUIT WHOEVER WE CAN.
ELEMENT WOMAN IS OUT OF HER MIND, FLASH. LIKE YOU.
THIS MIGHT BE OUR ONLY CHANCE TO--
ARGGHHH!
MOM, IF IT WAS ME I'D STOP AND HELP.
I KNOW YOU WOULD, BARRY.
BARRY, WE'RE SO PROUD OF YOU!


KRAKKOOMMM
WHAT'S WRONG WITH HIM?
NGNG.
THEY... THEY WON'T ST-STOP. MORE MNEMONIC CHANGES. MY ENTIRE LIFE WITH MY MOM AND DAD.
THE LIFE THAWNE ST-STOLE.
HAPPY BIRTHDAY, DEAR BAAAARRY!
WAITING ROOM
IT WAS A HEART ATTACK. I'M SO SUH-SORRY.
DAD'S IN A BETTER WORLD, MOM.
WHAT I WANT TO KNOW IS WHEN YOU'RE GOING TO SETTLE DOWN AND START A FAMILY!
HE'S GOT TO GET A GIRLFRIEND FIRST, NORA! DON'T YOU, BARRY?
I'M WORKING ON IT, POPS.
IT'S WORSE THAN BEFORE. I...I DON'T THINK I HAVE MUCH TIME LEFT BEFORE MY MEMORIES ARE COMPLETELY REPLACED.
AND ONCE THAT HAPPENS... I WON'T REMEMBER WHAT THE WORLD USED TO BE. WHAT IT'S SUPPOSED TO BE. IT'LL ALL BE GONE.
I'M GOING TO GIVE YOU SOME PHENYTOIN SODIUM. IT'S AN ANTIEPILEPTIC. IT SHOULD SLOW DOWN THE ELECTRICAL ACTIVITY IN YOUR BRAIN.
JUST FIGHT IT, ALLEN. KEEP FIGHTING IT.
DON'T FORGET MY SON.


"DON'T FORGET BRUCE!"
MR. AND MRS. BECK TOLD US NOT TO LEAVE THE HOUSE.
THEY AREN'T OUR PARENTS, PEDRO.
LEGALLY, THEY ARE.
EUGENE'S RIGHT! THEY'RE OUR FOSTER PARENTS BY LAW AND WE SHOULD LISTEN TO WHAT THEY SAY.
YOU NEVER LISTEN TO WHAT THEY SAY, FREDDY.
NO, I NEVER LISTEN TO WHAT YOU SAY.
CAN WE PLEASE CHANGE THE CHANNEL? AMERICAN IDOL IS ON.
I AM NOT WATCHING AMERICAN IDOL, DARLA.
LOOK, WE'RE NOT GONNA CHANGE INTO CAPTAIN THUNDER UNLESS WE ALL SHOUT THE MAGIC WORD SO LET'S PUT IT TO A VOTE! AMERICAN IDOL OR GETTING OUR ASS KICKED BY WONDER WOMAN!
WELL, WHEN YOU PUT IT THAT WAY, FREDDY...
PIZZA.
UH, WHAT?
YOU WANT TO ORDER PIZZA, BILLY? THAT'S A GREAT IDEA! REALLY GREAT!
NO. EVERY FRIDAY NIGHT, WE ORDER PIZZA AND WE WATCH A MOVIE WITH MR. AND MRS. BECK. IT'S THE ONLY TIME WE ACT LIKE A FAMILY.
WHY SHOULDN'T IT BE? THE ONLY REAL FAMILY HERE IS YOU AND MARY, BILLY.
DO YOU EVEN REMEMBER WHAT THE WIZARD WAS TRYING TO TEACH US BY GIVING US THESE POWERS? FAMILY ISN'T ABOUT BLOOD, FREDDY. FAMILY'S ABOUT BOND.
JUST LIKE PIZZA NIGHT.
HAVE ANY OF YOU BESIDES MARY ACTUALLY THOUGHT ABOUT WHAT'S GOING TO HAPPEN IF AQUAMAN AND WONDER WOMAN AREN'T STOPPED?
NO MORE PIZZA?
NO MORE ANYTHING.


KRAAATCHH
WE NEED YOUR HELP.
HEY, KIDS! ANYONE WANT A JUICE BOX?
"I'M NOT SURE WHAT WE CAN DO."


I HEARD YOU ONCE HELPED THE SANDMAN RECOVER HIS MEMORIES WITH THE MAGICAL LIGHTNING THAT GIVES YOU YOUR POWERS. I THOUGHT YOU MIGHT BE CONNECTED TO THE FLASH...IN SOME WAY.
I DIDN'T HELP THE SANDMAN RECOVER HIS MEMORIES, BATMAN, I JUST STOPPED HIS MIND FROM GETTING ANY WORSE. OR AT LEAST I THINK I DID.
WHAT'S WRONG WITH HIM?
SIMILAR TO THE SANDMAN. HE'S EXPERIENCING SOME KIND OF...MENTAL DETERIORATION.
CYBORG, CAN I, UH, CAN I HAVE YOUR AUTOGRAPH?
YOUR FOSTER PARENTS LET YOU KEEP A TIGER IN THE HOUSE?
WHOA! YOU SEE HIM?
MY CYBERNETIC EYE DOES, BUT MY OTHER EYE...
I KNOW. THE WIZARD CAST A SPELL SO ONLY WE COULD SEE TAWNY FOR WHAT HE REALLY IS--THE LAST OF THE GREAT STRIPED TIGERS OF KAHNDAQ.
EVERYONE ELSE JUST SEES A HOUSE CAT.
AND LATELY, HE'S BEEN STARTING TO ACT LIKE ONE. IT'S TRUE WHAT THEY SAY...
"PERCEPTION IS REALITY."
I FEEL... SOMETHING--
KZZTTT


KRRAKKOOOOMMM
BILLY?!
WHO... WHO IS HE?
MY NAME IS BARRY ALLEN--
I MEAN, WHERE DO YOU COME FROM? I SAW A DIFFERENT WORLD. A WORLD WITH HOPE.
IS THAT WHAT YOU'RE HERE TO DO? ARE YOU HERE TO HELP US?
...RECEIVING UNBELIEVABLE REPORTS NOW OF...A MASSACRE OVER THE UNITED KINGDOM...


A FLEET OF U.S. FIGHTERS ON THEIR WAY TO STRIKE AGAINST THE AMAZONS WERE MET BY... INVISIBLE JETS.
OH, NO.
THE FIRST VERIFIED CASUALTY IS PILOT HAL "HIGHBALL" JORDAN.
HAL...
REPORTS ARE COMING IN THAT SOMETHING HAS HAPPENED OVER THERE... A MASSIVE EXPLOSION, BUT IT'S NOT FROM US, IT'S...
AQUAMAN AND ATLANTIS.
HOW DO YOU KNOW?
SATELLITE IMAGERY SHOWS A GIGANTIC TIDAL WAVE STRIKING THE U.K. IT'S STARTING.
THIS IS IT, EVERYONE. THIS IS THE END--!
HEY!
FWAASHHH


WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU--?
WE HAVE TO DO SOMETHING.
PEOPLE ARE DYING. REAL PEOPLE ARE DYING. I CAN'T PRETEND THAT THIS IS JUST A DREAM THAT'S GOING TO GET WIPED AWAY ANYMORE.
BUT IT IS GOING TO GET WIPED AWAY.
I COULD FORGET EVERYTHING I KNOW AT ANY MOMENT. AND IF WE FAIL TO STOP THAWNE--
WE WON'T.
EVEN IF WE DO FIND THE REVERSE-FLASH, TRYING TO FIGURE OUT WHAT EVENTS HE ALTERED IN THE PAST WILL BE LIKE TRYING TO FIND THE RIGHT GRAIN OF SAND IN THE OCEAN.
AS MUCH AS I DON'T WANT TO ADMIT IT, THIS COULD BE THE WORLD WE'RE STUCK WITH.
WE NEED TO CONFRONT AQUAMAN AND WONDER WOMAN. AND WE'RE GOING TO NEED EVERY KNOWN SUPER-HUMAN TO HELP US DO IT.
WE HAVE TO SAVE THIS WORLD.
NO.
NO?
EITHER WE CHANGE THIS WORLD, FLASH...
OR WE LET IT BURN IN HELL.
WHY ARE YOU SHOUTING?


WE HAVE SOME FRIGHTENED KIDS HERE.
WE'RE NOT SCARED, CYBORG, WE'RE SMART.
WHAT'RE YOU GUYS TALKING ABOUT? CAN WE TALK ABOUT IT TOO?!
YOU'RE IN COMMUNICATION WITH EVERYONE, RIGHT, VIC?
EVERYONE WHO?
EVERYONE WHO IS REFUSING TO HELP.
CALL THEM. TELL THEM WE'RE GOING TO PUT A STOP TO AQUAMAN AND WONDER WOMAN.
WHAT ARE YOU WAITING FOR?
THEY WON'T COME, FLASH. NOT UNLESS BATMAN DOES.
WHY HIM?
BECAUSE OF THE URBAN LEGEND BUILT UP AROUND BATMAN OVER THE DECADES.
I KNOW HE'S A JUST A MAN IN A COSTME, BUT EVERYONE ELSE SEES HIM AS SOMETHING MORE. THEY'VE HEARD THE STORIES AND BELIEVED THEM.
THEY THINK BATMAN'S INVINCIBLE.
NO ONE'S INVINCIBLE.
BUT THAT FACT SHOULDN'T BE HOLDING ANYONE BACK. WE ALL HAVE SOMETHING TO OFFER. WE ALL HAVE SOMETHING TO LOSE.
WE HAVE TO MOVE, AND WE HAVE TO MOVE NOW.
FLASH?


WE'LL COME WITH YOU.
BUT BILLY--
WE HAVE TO, GUYS. EVEN IF IT'S ONLY THE FLASH AND US. WE CAN'T SIT INSIDE AND WATCH TV AND HOPE SOMETHING GOOD IS GOING TO HAPPEN.
WE HAVE TO MAKE IT HAPPEN.
NO. NO, IT'S TOO DANGEROUS FOR KIDS--
IT'S DANGEROUS FOR EVERYONE, FLASH.
I'LL COME. I MEAN I KNOW YOU KNOW THAT AND I KNOW EVERYONE THINKS I'M A BIT OFF OR WHATEVER BUT STILL...
I'LL HELP HOWEVER I CAN IF YOU'LL STILL HAVE ME.
I WANT PIZZA NEXT FRIDAY, FREDDY.
ME TOO.
YEAH.
FREDDY? ...PLEASE?
ALL RIGHT, ALL RIGHT!
SOMEBODY'S GOTTA BE A HERO.
BRUCE WOULD'VE COME.
CYBORG, WAIT.
TELL THE OTHERS TO MEET US THERE.


"WE'RE TAKING MY PLANE."
The elevated coast of New Themyscira.
THERE'S NOTHING LIKE WAITING UNTIL THE LAST MINUTE, IS THERE, BATMAN? HOW DRAMATIC.
ATLANTIS IS IN THE MIDST OF AN ATTACK, OUTSIDER. IT MAY BE SENDING THE AMAZONS INTO OVERDRIVE, BUT IT'S ALSO GIVING US A DISTRACTION.
WE HAVE A CLEAR PATH TO LONDON. SO WILL YOU.
IT'S INSANE OVER THERE! YOU EXPECT US TO COME NOW?
YES, BLACKOUT.
SO GET YOUR ASS IN GEAR AND GET HERE HOWEVER YOU CAN.
UNFORTUNATELY, THE REST OF THE SECRET SEVEN CALLED IN SICK BECAUSE OF AN ACCIDENT WITH SHADE, BATMAN.
DOES THAT MEAN YOU'RE NOT COMING, ENCHANTRESS?
QUITE THE CONTRARY, CYBORG.
IT MEANS I NEED TO FIND A NEW TEAM.
WHO'S YOUR FRIEND IN THE SCARLET AND GOLD?
BWOOFF
HIS NAME IS THE FLASH.


"NOW LET'S GO STOP A WAR."
YOU KILLED MY WIFE.
SHE TRIED TO ASSASSINATE ME, ARTHUR. I WAS PROTECTING MYSELF.
YET YOU'RE WEARING HER HELMET LIKE A TROPHY.
NO. A WARNING.
I CAN'T BELIEVE I EVER LOVED YOU.
YOU NEVER REALLY DID.
SHAZAM!
KRA-KOOOMMMM


SIX OF US AND A TIGER AGAINST TWO SUPERHUMAN ARMIES?
I'VE BEEN UP AGAINST WORSE AND WON, BATMAN.
NO ONE LIKES A BRAGGER, RED.
I'VE GOT WONDER WOMAN IN MY SIGHTS.
NO, YOU DON'T, CYBORG.
RRROARRRR


WONDER WOMAN'S MINE!
I'VE GOT A LOCK ON AQUAMAN'S BIO-WEAPON. THE ONE ABOUT TO BRING THIS ISLAND DOWN.
FIND IT AND SHUT IT DOWN. I'M GOING TO TRY TO GET THROUGH TO AQUAMAN.
HE'S SLAUGHTERED MILLIONS OF "AIR-BREATHERS," FLASH. HE WON'T LISTEN--
ARTHUR.
WHO ARE YOU?
SOMEONE WHO CAN'T BELIEVE YOU COULD TURN INTO SUCH A MONSTER.
I WAS ONLY TRYING TO TALK TO YOU LAST TIME. I WAS TRYING TO UNDERSTAND WHY YOU WOULD DO THIS.
BUT I'M DONE TALKING.
OH.
I THINK YOU'RE DONE PLAYING GROWNUP TOO, KIDS.
ENCHANTRESS?! WHAT ARE YOU--?


SHAZAM!
SHAZAM!
FREDDY?! EUGENE?! WAKE UP! WE HAVE TO CHANGE! WE HAVE TO BRING CAPTAIN THUNDER BACK!
HE'S JUST A BOY.
BILLY?


BILLY!
NO!
N-NO... JUST A BOY... JUST...
OH, BARRY.



FOR YOUR EYES ONLY

Emily Sung, Element Woman

Designed by Andy Kubert
2010

Character Design Notes:

-Breath smells like chalk

-Transmutes body into any element or compound

-Colorful exterior and smile hides sadness

-Close talker, socially awkward



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FLASHPOINT™

Billy, Mary, and Freddie

Designed by Andy Kubert
2010

Character Design Notes: Billy Batson

-Brown jacket with lightning bolt on lapel

-Red shirt with yellow collar

-Blue jeans

-Sneakers

-Commanding and good hearted

-Possesses the Courage of Achilles





Graphic Representation of chest logo

Captain Thunder, The World's Mightiest Mortal

-Captain Thunder is formed when six kids with the powers of the wizard Shazam yell "SHAZAM!" in unison. Each kid lives in the same foster home as Billy Batson.



Character Design Notes: Mary Batson

-Lightning bolt earrings

-Hair tucked behind ears to show off earrings

-Hoodie sweatshirt zipped up at the bottom

-Cropped blue jeans

-Sandals

-Rabbit

-Common sense and confident

-Possesses the Stamina of Atlas

Character Design Notes: Freddie Freeman

-Lightning bolt necklace

-Plaid shirt over black long-sleeve shirt

-Blue jeans

-Black shoes

-Slick con-kid

-Possesses the Power of Zeus

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FLASHPOINT™

Darla Dudley

Designed by Andy Kubert
2010

Character Design Notes:

-African-American

-Black hair

-V-neck sweater cut off at midsection with extra-long sleeves

-Dark blue shirt with lightning bolt logo (keep top visible)

-Pleated skirt

-Dark blue shoes

-Cute and energetic

-Possesses the Speed of Mercury



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FLASHPOINT

Eugene, Pedro Peña, and Tawny

Designed by Andy Kubert
2010

Character Design Notes: Eugene Choi

-Asian-American

-Long, messy black hair

-Glasses

-Black suit

-White shirt

-Red tie with lightning bolt tie clasp

-Intellectual and more comfortable communicating by text than actually talking, covers up his social awkwardness with faux arrogance

-Possesses the Wisdom of Solomon





Character Design Notes: Frankie Taggart

-Hispanic

-Short black hair

-Red baseball hat with lightning bolt logo

-Dark blue t-shirt with red bands around neck and arms

-Cargo shorts

-Hightop sneakers

-Slightly chubby, shy

-Possesses the Strength of Hercules

Character Design Notes: Tawny

-Lightning bolt charm on collar

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FLASHPOINT

Farooq Amar, Blackout

Designed by Andy Kubert
2010

Character Design Notes:

-Arab-American

-Ski mask to protect identity

-Black t-shirt with red collar and logo

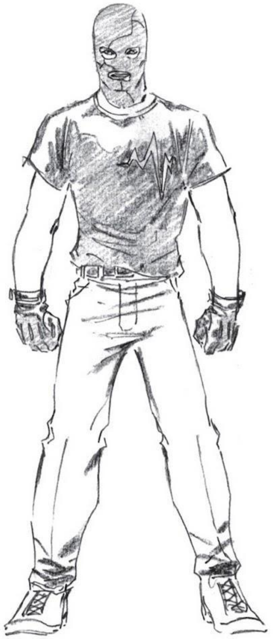
-Black gloves

-Blue jeans

-Teenager in high school

-Human generator with electrical abilities

- Desperately trying to get his life back, Farooq has been on the run from various enemies and energy corporations for the last six months.





Variation of chest logo

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FLASHPOINT

Michael Desai, The Outsider

Designed by Andy Kubert
2010

Character Design Notes: Preliminary Costume

-Blue logo on chest

-Blue gloves

-White suit

Character Design Notes: Final Costume

-White three-piece suit

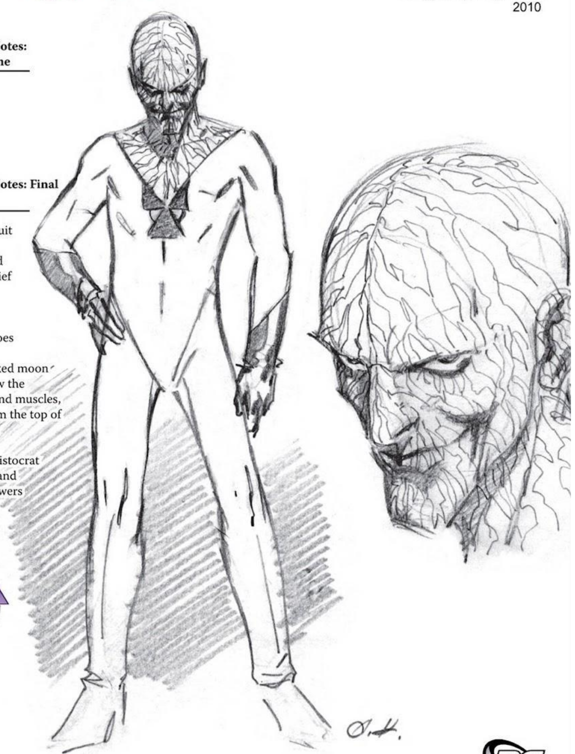
-Velvet purple tie and matching handkerchief

-Purple gloves

-Thousand-dollar shoes

-Skin looks like cracked moon rock—the lines follow the contour of features and muscles, emanating down from the top of the scalp

-Successful Indian aristocrat with super-strength and gravity-enhanced powers

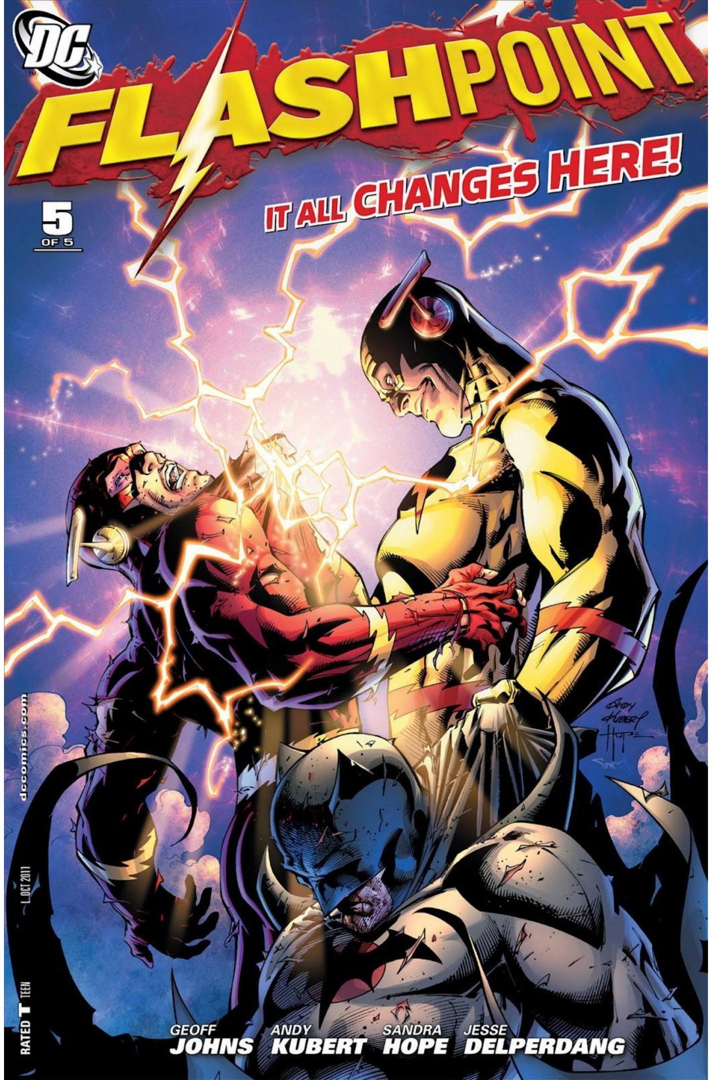




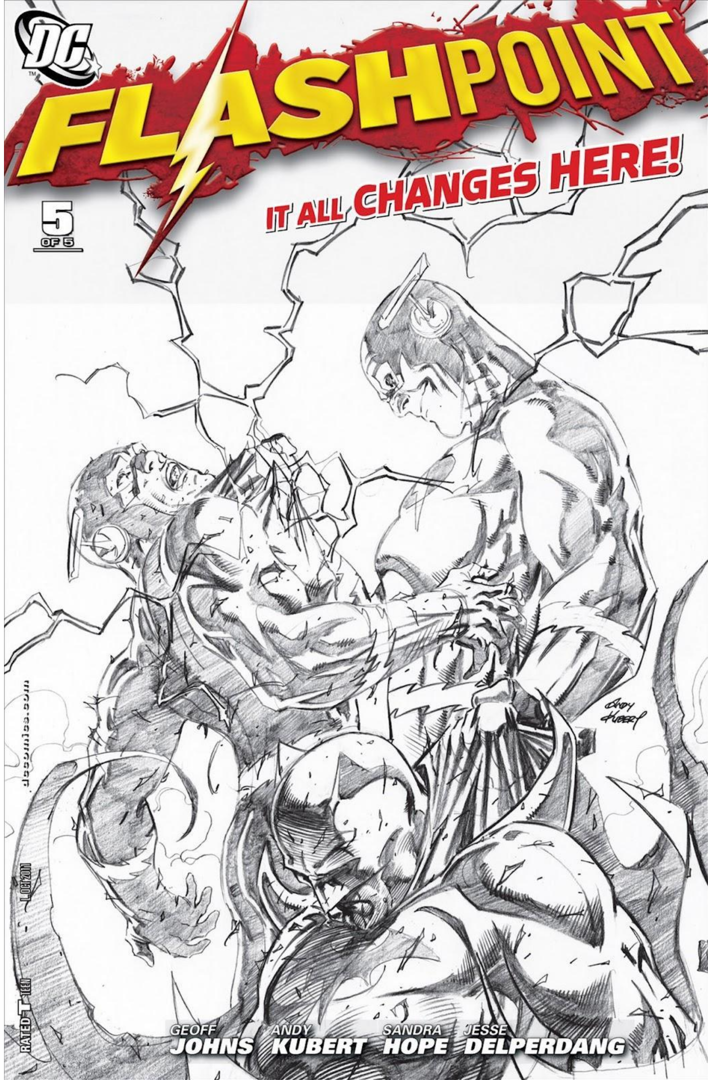
Graphic Representation of chest logo

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FLASHPOINT
IT ALL CHANGES HERE!
5
OF 5
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ANDY KUBERT
SANDRA HOPE
JESSE DELPERDANG


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RATED T TEEN



IT'S TAKING YOU LONGER TO GET UP TO SPEED THAN I WOULD'VE GUESSED.
PHYSICALLY AND MENTALLY.
THAWNE?
YES, BARRY. I'M HERE. HERE IN THIS HELL OF A WORLD.
"A WORLD BEING TORN APART BY YOUR FRIENDS."
BILLY!
STAY BEHIND ME, KIDS!
WHAT DID YOU DO TO THE WORLD?!



WHAT DID I DO?
OH, BARRY. MY IDOL. MY INSPIRATION. THAT'S THE BEAUTY OF ALL THIS MADNESS.
I DIDN'T DO ANYTHING. NOT A THING.
YOU SEE, IT TURNS OUT...
YOU'RE THE VILLAIN TODAY.
YOU'RE A MORE DANGEROUS ENEMY TO YOURSELF THAN I COULD EVER HOPE TO BE.
BUT YOU FORGOT WHAT YOU DID, DIDN'T YOU?
I WANT YOU TO REMEMBER, BARRY. I WANT YOU TO KNOW THE TRUTH. AND I CAN DO THAT BY RESETTING YOUR INTERNAL VIBRATIONS--
--THOUGH IT WILL BE EXTREMELY PAINFUL.
LUCKY ME.
ARRGHH!


"DO YOU REMEMBER, BARRY?
"YOU WERE AT YOUR MOTHER'S GRAVE ON HER BIRTHDAY. HER FIRST BIRTHDAY SINCE YOU LEARNED I WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR HER MURDER.
"AND A LIFE OF GNAWING EMPTINESS FINALLY PUSHED YOU OVER THE EDGE. TO A PLACE YOU SWORE YOU'D NEVER GO.
"TO THE PAST.
"TO THE DAY YOUR MOTHER DIED."
DO YOU REMEMBER?
YOU FOUND ME. AND IN THAT INSTANT, YOU PULLED THE ENTIRE SPEED FORCE INTO YOU TO STOP ME.
TO STOP ME FROM KILLING YOUR MOTHER.
YOU WERE LIKE A BULLET THROUGH A WINDSHIELD. YOU SHATTERED HISTORY.
THE LIVES OF THE PEOPLE CLOSEST TO YOU WERE PUT ON A BROKEN PATH.
YOU CHANGED TIME LIKE AN AMATEUR!
THIS IS YOUR FAULT, BARRY. THIS HELL IS YOUR CREATION.
YOU TRADED THE LIFE OF YOUR MOTHER FOR THE REST OF THE WORLD!
DO YOU REMEMBER?!


FLASHPOINT
PART FIVE OF FIVE
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YES!



DAMN YOU, THAWNE...
DAMN YOU.
I REMEMBER!
EXCELLENT.
THEN IT'S TIME TO FINISH THIS.
AAHHH!
BWOOOOOOOFFF



YOU DID THIS?
I... YES.
THEN YOU CAN STILL FIX THIS. WE JUST NEED TO GET THAWNE OUT OF THE EQUATION--
DR. WAYNE.
YOU'VE GOT IT BACKWARDS...
DOCTOR THOMAS WAYNE.
YOU SAD OLD MAN.
THE FLASH WAS THE ONE THAT WAS REMOVED FROM MY EQUATION.
THE FLASH IS NOTHING TO ME ANYMORE.
THAT WAS THE WHOLE BENEFIT OF THIS.


WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?
I'VE NEVER KILLED YOU, BARRY, BECAUSE I NEED YOU.
I NEED BARRY ALLEN TO BECOME THE FLASH. AND TO LIVE A LONG LIFE.
LONG ENOUGH TO GENERATE A SPEED FORCE THAT WOULD BE ACCESSIBLE CENTURIES AFTER ITS CREATION. IN THE 25TH CENTURY. IN *MY* TIME!
I WAS RUNNING THROUGH THE *TIMESTREAM* WHEN YOU *ALTERED* IT.
BECAUSE OF THAT, YOU'VE TRANSFORMED ME INTO A *LIVING PARADOX.*
YOU'VE *FREED* ME FROM THE SHACKLES OF ANY *HISTORY!*


THAT MEANS NO MATTER WHAT HAPPENS TO BARRY ALLEN IN THE PAST, PRESENT OR FUTURE--I WILL *STILL* EXIST!
I AM *REMOVED* FROM THE TIMELINE.
I EXIST *OUTSIDE* OF IT.
YOU DON'T MATTER TO ME!
I CAN KILL YOU IN YOUR MOTHER'S WOMB OR I CAN KILL YOU THIS VERY SECOND!
I CAN HURT *YOU* BUT *YOU* CANNOT HURT *ME,* BARRY!
THE LEGENDARY FLASH CANNOT HURT EOBARD THAWNE!


WHAT ABOUT ME?
DOCTOR'S ADVICE: WHEN YOU'RE IN THE MIDDLE OF A WAR...
...DON'T STAND STILL.


YOU...
YOU KILLED HIM.
OOO! HIS COSTUME IS KINDA LIKE YOURS, FLASH!
BUT I LIKE YOURS WAY BETTER. WHO WAS THAT?
NO ONE WE NEED TO WORRY ABOUT NOW, ELEMENT WOMAN.
WE HAVE OTHER WORRIES ALL AROUND US, BATMAN.
BOOOOMMMM
"THE ENCHANTRESS IS WORKING WITH WONDER WOMAN."
SHE INCAPACITATED THE SHAZAM KIDS.
BILLY WAS KILLED!
WE NEED TO GET THEM OUT OF HERE AND TO SAFETY.
CYBORG?!
YOUR METAL SKULL WILL MAKE A FITTING TROPHY FOR THE KING OF ATLANTIS!
BLAMM BLAMM
DON'T GET MAD, STONE.



CAN'T LET YOU HAVE ALL THE FUN.
GRIFTER?
AND THE RESISTANCE!


LET'S CLEAN THIS MESS UP.
WHAT IF I LIKE IT MESSY?
ARZZZ
AHHHH!
BATMAN!
KRRAKKKAAZZT!
THOMAS?

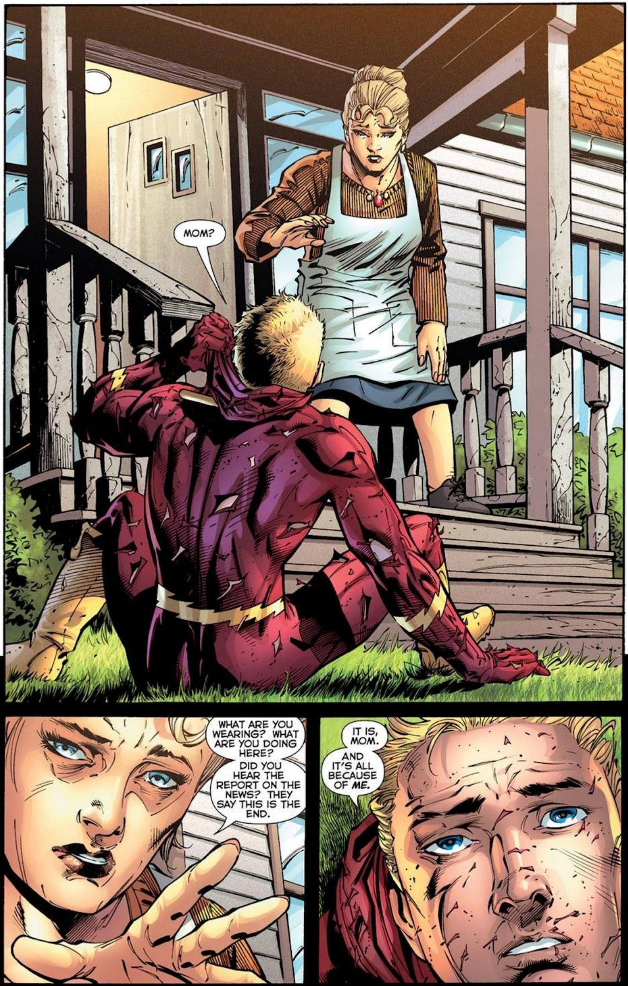

THE FUNNY THING ABOUT ALL OF THIS...I DON'T REALLY CARE WHOSE SIDE I'M ON.
I JUST WANT TO HAVE SOME FUN!
KNEW IT.


NO MORE.


I KNEW SUPERMAN WOULD--
NNNG.
I DO APPRECIATE YOUR COMING FOR DINNER, BARRY.
I WOULDN'T MISS IT, MOM.
HELL OF A WAY TO GO, HUH, BARRY?
KILL THEM! KILL THEM ALL!
GRODD TOO?
I'VE HAD ENOUGH.
I'M GETTING HUNDREDS OF SEISMIC READINGS.
THAT'S BAD, RIGHT?
WHATEVER ATLANTIS WAS PLANNING ON DOING TO SINK BRITAIN, THEY'RE DOING IT.
DAMMIT, THEY'RE GOING TO CRACK THE PLANET IN HALF! WE--
BOOOOOOOOOM


NO. I'M... FORGETTING WHAT I'M HERE FOR. I HAVE TO...
RUN AWAY BEFORE YOUR MEMORIES DO.
RUN AWAY? DR. WAYNE--
YOU CAN SAVE THOSE DYING RIGHT NOW, BARRY. YOU CAN SAVE THE MILLIONS THAT ALREADY HAVE DIED.
AND YOU CAN KEEP YOUR PROMISE.
YOU CAN SAVE MY SON.
HOW CAN I... RUN AWAY FROM THIS?
THE SAME REASON I CAN LEAVE THIS WORLD BEHIND.
I KNOW A BETTER WORLD...WILL REPLACE IT.
BUT...I AM SORRY...
I'M SORRY ABOUT YOUR MOTHER...
THEY'RE... GONE.
I HAVE TO...


RUN.
KRRAKKLL
KRRAKKLL
MOM.
BARRY?


MOM?
WHAT ARE YOU WEARING? WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?
DID YOU HEAR THE REPORT ON THE NEWS? THEY SAY THIS IS THE END.
IT IS, MOM.
AND IT'S ALL BECAUSE OF ME.


"IT'S SO HARD TO BELIEVE, BARRY."
"I KNOW, MOM. I CHANGED THE WORLD FOR THE WORSE."
BUT THERE HAS TO BE A WAY I CAN SAVE EVERYONE. INCLUDING YOU.
BARRY, IF YOU STOPPED YOURSELF--
EVEN IF I WANTED TO GO BACK IN TIME AND STOP MYSELF...
"I CAN'T ACCURATELY TRAVEL TO THE PAST WITHOUT A MACHINE CALLED THE COSMIC TREADMILL."
BUT YOU WERE DRAWN BACK TO ME WHEN YOU STARTED TO BREAK THE TIME BARRIER.
LIKE A LIGHTNING ROD.
"IF YOU FOCUS ON YOURSELF, WOULDN'T YOU BE DRAWN TO THE RIGHT TIME?"
AND IF I STOP MYSELF...I SAVE THEM, BUT I DON'T SAVE YOU...THERE HAS TO BE ANOTHER WAY.
HOW MANY PEOPLE DIED BECAUSE OF THIS?
HOW MANY, BARRY?


MILLIONS.
BUT I WON'T LET YOU DIE! I WON'T LET THIS LIFE BE ERASED.
MOM--
IT WON'T BE.
IT HAPPENED, BARRY. ONE WAY OR ANOTHER, THE LIFE WE HAD TOGETHER HAPPENED.
"AND I COULDN'T HAVE BEEN PROUDER OR HAPPIER TO HAVE A SON LIKE YOU."
KRRAKKLL
YOU HAVE TO LET ME GO, BARRY.
I DON'T WANT TO.
NEITHER DO I...
BUT I'LL BE WITH YOUR FATHER.
"I'LL BE OKAY."


WHAT THE HELL IS GOING ON?
I KNOW WHAT YOU'RE FEELING.
AND I'M SORRY.
GOD, I'M SO SORRY.
WHAT ARE YOU DOING?! LET ME GO! I HAVE TO SAVE HER!
NO!!!!
NO!
KRRAAKKOOMM



I...I NEED TO RUN BACK INTO THE TIMESTREAM, BUT...
I SEE THREE TIMELINES. WHY--?
BECAUSE THE HISTORY OF HEROES WAS SHATTERED INTO THREE LONG AGO.
SPLINTERED TO WEAKEN YOUR WORLD FOR THEIR IMPENDING ARRIVAL.
YOU MUST ALL STAND TOGETHER. THE TIMELINES MUST BECOME ONE AGAIN.
YOU CAN HELP ME FIX THAT, BARRY ALLEN, BUT AT A COST.
AARRGHH!
WHAT... WHO WAS THAT? WHAT DID SHE SAY--?
BARRY?


BARRY!
BARRY, WAKE UP!
FORREST?
C'MON, BARRY. I KNOW WE'VE BEEN PULLING EIGHTEEN-HOUR SHIFTS ON THESE COLD CASES, BUT DIRECTOR SINGH'S NOT GOING TO CARE.
COLD CASES DON'T EARN HIM POINTS WITH THE CHIEF. HE WANTS US TO FOCUS ON THE *HERE* AND *NOW*.
BARRY? YOU OKAY?
YEAH.
I'M OKAY.


WOOOOSHH
FLASH?
BRUCE.
IT *IS* BRUCE, ISN'T IT?
OF COURSE IT IS. WHAT'S WRONG, BARRY?
WHAT'S HAPPENED?


THE WHOLE WORLD CHANGED BECAUSE YOU TRIED TO PREVENT YOUR MOTHER'S MURDER?
AND IT WAS ON THE BRINK OF DESTRUCTION BEFORE I CHANGED IT BACK.
BUT NOW EVERYTHING'S BACK TO "*NORMAL*"?
AS FAR AS I CAN TELL.
TRYING TO CHANGE HISTORY...I SHOULD'VE KNOWN BETTER.
THAWNE WAS RIGHT. I WAS *SELFISH.*
DON'T BEAT YOURSELF UP, BARRY.
IF I HAD YOUR POWER, I WOULD'VE TRIED THE EXACT SAME THING.
AND DON'T THINK I HAVEN'T THOUGHT ABOUT IT.
THERE'S STILL SOMETHING I CAN'T EXPLAIN...


MY MEMORIES OF *THIS* WORLD WERE *FADING* EVERY MINUTE I WAS IN THE ALTERNATE TIMELINE, BUT NOW...EVEN *HOURS* LATER...
I STILL REMEMBER A THIRTEENTH BIRTHDAY PARTY. ONE WHERE MY MOTHER BAKED ME A CAKE SHAPED LIKE A SPORTS CAR.
I REMEMBER TAKING MY DRIVER'S TEST WITH HER WHEN I TURNED SIXTEEN.
I REMEMBER GOING TO HER HOUSE FOR DINNER ON SUNDAYS. LAST WEEK, SHE MADE LASAGNA. I BROUGHT DESSERT. A LEMON TART. HER FAVORITE.
I DON'T KNOW *WHY* OR *HOW,* BUT I REMEMBER EVERY SINGLE MOMENT I SPENT WITH MY MOTHER IN THAT ALTERNATE TIMELINE.
I'M GUESSING IT COULD BE A TEMPORAL AFTEREFFECT OR THE RESULT OF CHRONAL RESIDUE STILL IN MY BLOODSTREAM.
OR IT COULD BE A GIFT, BARRY.
A GIFT TO MAKE IT ALL A LITTLE EASIER.
BRUCE...


THERE'S ONE OTHER THING I DIDN'T TELL YOU YET. THERE WAS SOMEONE I MET THERE.
SOMEONE I COULDN'T HAVE SAVED THE WORLD WITHOUT.
HE GAVE ME THIS.
Bruce
WHAT IS IT?
Dear Son,
There's only one thing that I know about life. I know some things happen


Love always
your father
Thomas


YOU'RE ONE HELL OF A MESSENGER.
THANK YOU, BARRY.
YOU'RE WELCOME, BRUCE.
THE END


BLACK LABEL
PLASTIC MAN NO MORE!
BOOK ONE
17+ MATURE
CANTWELL • LINS • EDGAR • MAIOLO

PLASTIC MAN NO MORE!

BOOK ONE

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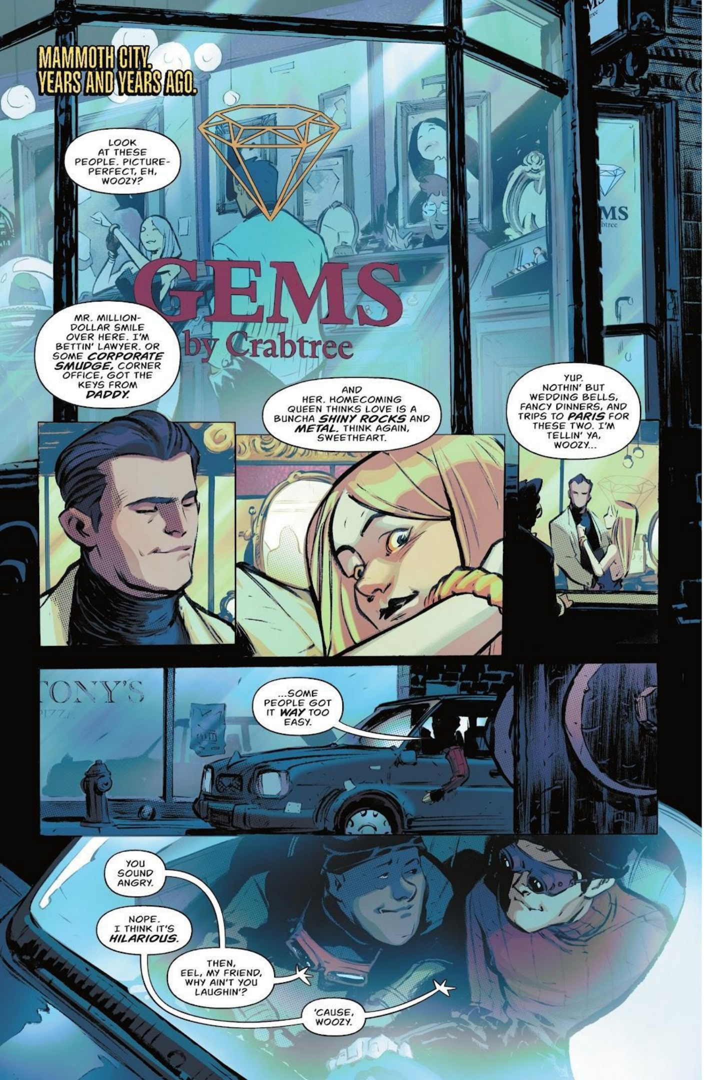
CHRIS SAMNEE & NATHAN FAIRBAIRN
VARIANT COVER

TYLER BOSS
1:25 VARIANT COVER

SUPERMAN CREATED BY **JERRY SIEGEL** AND **JOE SHUSTER**
BY SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT WITH **THE JERRY SIEGEL FAMILY**

DC BLACK LABEL




MAMMOTH CITY. YEARS AND YEARS AGO.
LOOK AT THESE PEOPLE. PICTURE-PERFECT, EH, WOOZY?
GEMS by Crabtree
MR. MILLION-DOLLAR SMILE OVER HERE. I'M BETTIN' LAWYER. OR SOME CORPORATE SMUDGE, CORNER OFFICE, GOT THE KEYS FROM DADDY.
AND HER. HOMECOMING QUEEN THINKS LOVE IS A BUNCHA SHINY ROCKS AND METAL. THINK AGAIN, SWEETHEART.
YUP. NOTHIN' BUT WEDDING BELLS, FANCY DINNERS, AND TRIPS TO PARIS FOR THESE TWO. I'M TELLIN' YA, WOOZY...
TONY'S
...SOME PEOPLE GOT IT WAY TOO EASY.
YOU SOUND ANGRY.
NOPE. I THINK IT'S HILARIOUS.
THEN, EEL, MY FRIEND, WHY AIN'T YOU LAUGHIN'?
'CAUSE, WOOZY.


GEMS by Crabtree
I'M THE PUNCHLINE.


GET YOUR GOGGLES ON. GONNA BE A LOT OF FLYING GLASS.
THERE'S A WATCH INSIDE. SAW IT LAST WEEK WITH ANGEL. IT'S GOT A SOLAR SYSTEM ON IT. ALL THE PLANETS ARE LITTLE GEMS.
LET'S MAKE SURE WE GRAB IT. I WANNA GIVE IT TO HER.
YOU GONNA TELL HER IT'S STOLEN?
YOU GONNA DO WHAT I SAY?
LADIES AND GENTLEMEN!


PLEASE RISE AND GIVE A WARM WELCOME TO YOUR MAMMOTH CITY JEWEL THIEVES!
BURGLARS! WE'RE BEING BURGLED!
ALARM PUTS THREE MINUTES ON THE CLOCK!
YOU GOT IT, BABE!
HEY NOW, WHAT DO YOU THINK--
DON'T BE A HERO, PAL. I DOUBT IT'D FIT ON YOUR IMPRESSIVE RESUME.
YOINK.


WHERE'S THAT WATCH?
WHAT?
RUMMAGE
THE SOLAR SYSTEM WATCH, WHERE IS IT?
NO IDEA, BUD. WE GOTTA SCRAM--
NO!
TWO MINUTES!


WHERE IS IT? SOLAR SYSTEM WATCH, PLANETS ARE LITTLE GEMS?
WHERE IS IT?!
HEY, WE GOTTA GO!
I DON'T... I DON'T KNOW--
GET YOUR HANDS OFF ME!
I'M GONNA FIND IT.
SMMAASSHH!
LET'S GO!


GEMS
by Crabtree
HEY, I THINK WE'RE--
HRRRRKK!
--HOME FREE...
FREEZE!
WELL, I'LL BE. PATRICK O'BRIAN.
"SLICK AS AN EEL," IZZAT RIGHT?
MY ASS.


PRISON.
PAROLE.
PAROLE VIOLATION (17TH OFFENSE).
POLICE ON SCENE.
POLYPROPYLEXENOL SUBMERSION.
PLASTICIZATION.
POWER...
...AND PARTNERSHIP.
Patrick.
Angel.
Li'l Luke.
HE IS
PLASTIC MAN™


Twenty years later.
SOLARIS, YOUR RAMPAGE ENDS HERE...
...BY ORDER OF THE JUSTICE LEAGUE of AMERICA!
OH YEAH?
TELL THAT TO MY DEATH RAY, ASSHOLE.
CHK CHK
MY GOD! HE'S GOING TO VAPORIZE THOSE ORPHANS!
DON'T WORRY, BATSY, I GOT THIS.


LOOK AT THIS SAD SACK, TRYIN' TO BARBECUE SOME KIDS!
YOU SMELL THAT? IT'S LIKE SOMEONE'S MAKING A STEW WITH HOT DOGS AND BURNING TIRES.
THAT WOULD BE ME... AND IT HURTS... LITTLE HELP, PLEASE?
THAT OUGHT TO DO IT, GL! WELL DONE, EVERYBODY!


NO KIDDIN', WELL DONE...I PREFER MYSELF MORE MEDIUM RARE...
HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA!
HA HA HA HA HA HA!
PLASTIC MAN, YOU'RE TOO MUCH!
WOWEE, WISH I'D WORN A HIGHER SPF...
HA HA HA!
HAHA... YEAH...I MEAN IT, THOUGH... HAHA...
HAHAHA... OW...IT REALLY HURTS...


MAMMOTH CITY.
JUSTICE LEAGUE TRANSPORTER TUBE.
YEAH...I REALLY AM TOO MUCH...YOU KNOW WHAT YOU ARE, DIANA?
A SNOT. YEAH, WHY DONTCHA ASK YOUR LASSO...
AND HAL NEEDS TO BE SOME KINDA HANDSOME GREEN GOD...
CLIK
YOU HAVE...NO. NEW. VOICE-MAIL MESSAGES.
WHICH SUPERMAN DOESN'T LIKE, BECAUSE HE'S SUPPOSED TO BE GOD...
BARRY'S A JOCK--
BILLS, BILLS, BILLS, WONDERFUL, MORE BILLS--
--ARTHUR SMELLS LIKE THE WORST SECTION OF THE GROCERY STORE...
GREAT, NO OJ...
AND BATMAN IS...
...I MEAN, HE'S JUST...


...HE'S JUST... REALLY COOL...
HE'S ACTUALLY VERY COOL...JUST A VERY COOL-LOOKING GUY...
NEED TO SLEEP THIS DEATH RAY OFF... REGENERATE A LITTLE...

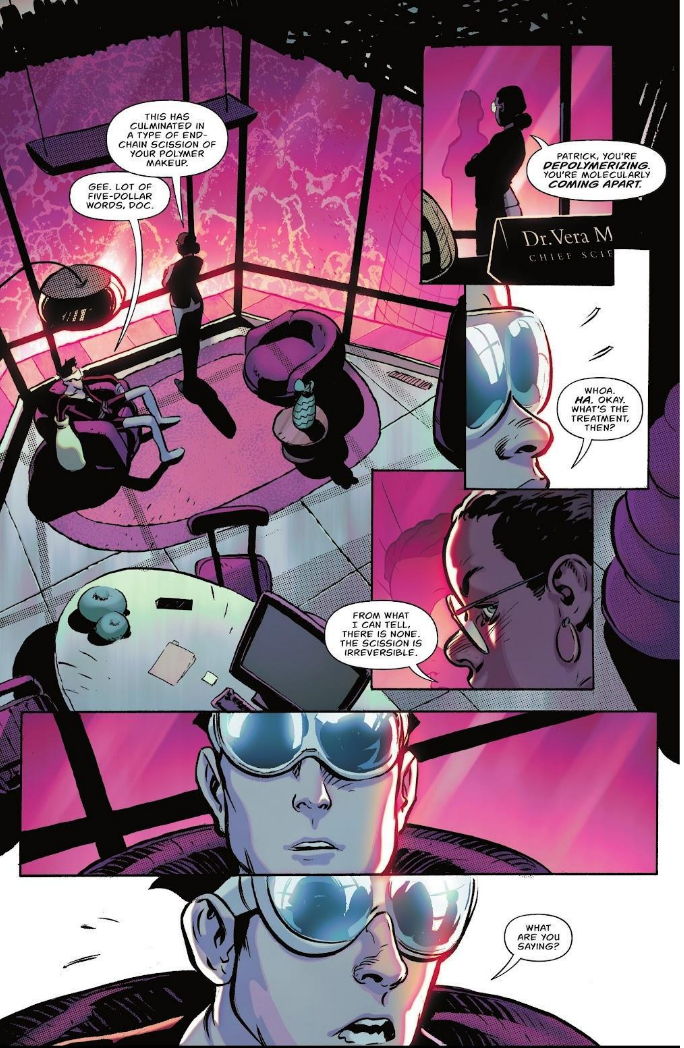

HUH...?
WHAT THE...


UH... OKAY...THERE A NEW HAND COMING OR...?
ANY DAY NOW...
CRIPES.
COME ON...
OKAY, THEN.


ALL OF WHICH IS TO SAY, NOW I'M WEARIN' A COLOSTOMY BAG ON MY ARM.
HA... YEAH...BUT I AM A LITTLE WORRIED...
THAT REMINDS ME. I HAD A LOOK AT THE INNER MECHANISMS OF SOLARIS'S DEATH RAY. SOME OF THE TECHNOLOGY COULD BE EXTRATERRESTRIAL IN ORIGIN.
HOW DID SOLARIS GAIN ACCESS TO ALIEN SCIENCE?
WOULD IT BE WORTH TALKING TO SOLARIS HIMSELF BEFORE HE'S TRANSFERRED TO BELLE REVE?
GOOD IDEA. DIANA, YOU AND OLIVER SHOULD LEAN ON HIM. SEE WHAT HE KNOWS.
COULD WE MAYBE ALSO GET ME CHECKED OUT BEFORE I GO ALL WICKED WITCH OF THE WEST?
PLASTIC MAN, YOU'RE TOO MUCH!

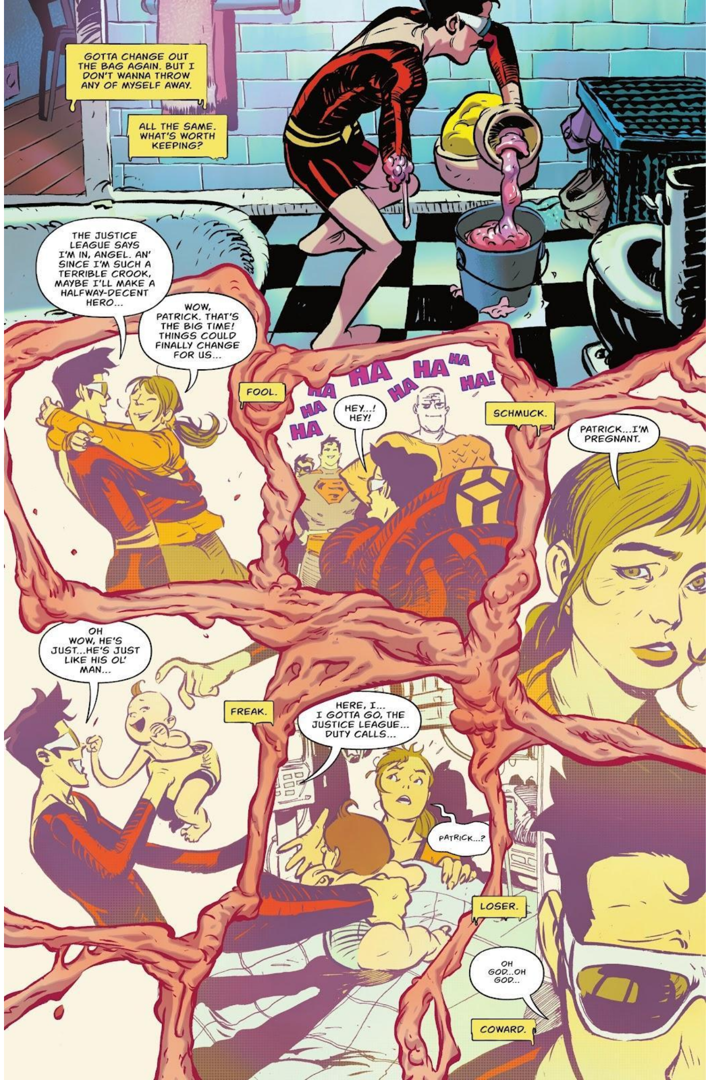

PATRICK.
I'M SORRY TO HEAR ABOUT YOUR HAND. IT SOUNDS SERIOUS.
YOU WOULDN'T KNOW IT FROM THE WAY THEY WERE LAUGHING IN THERE.
BELIEVE ME, I UNDERSTAND. THEY DON'T PAY ATTENTION TO ME VERY MUCH, EITHER.
YEAH...
BUT I DID MANAGE TO GET BATMAN'S ATTENTION AFTER YOU LEFT, AND I BELIEVE I WAS ABLE TO CONVEY THE SERIOUSNESS OF YOUR SITUATION.
OH. THANKS, BOBO...
HE SAID YOU MIGHT WANT TO CONSULT A PETROLEUM CHEMIST INSTEAD OF A DOCTOR.

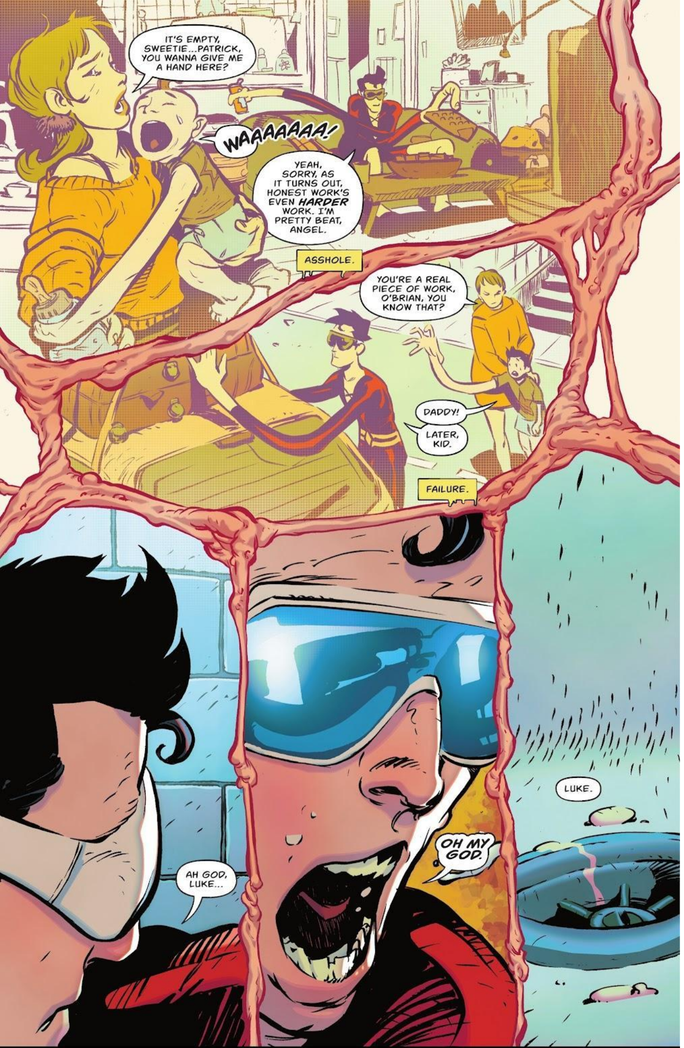

PETROLEUM?
OIL. PLASTICS. ET CETERA.
HE RECOMMENDED ONE AT WAYNE INDUSTRIES THAT HE SAID IS FAIRLY SHARP.
THANKS FOR PAYING ATTENTION. US FOLKS IN THE CHEAP SEATS GOTTA LOOK OUT FOR EACH OTHER, RIGHT?
CHEAP SEATS.
IT'S...JUST SOMETHING MY DAD USED TO SAY... LOOK, HE WAS A DRUNK.
GET YOURSELF CHECKED OUT, PATRICK. YOUR BAG'S FULL.
I WILL, BOBO. THANKS.
SHEESH...
"IT SEEMS THE PHOTODEGRADATION YOU EXPERIENCED HAS GIVEN WAY TO RAPID THERMO-OXIDATIVE DEGRADATION."


THIS HAS CULMINATED IN A TYPE OF END-CHAIN SCISSION OF YOUR POLYMER MAKEUP.
GEE. LOT OF FIVE-DOLLAR WORDS, DOC.
PATRICK, YOU'RE DEPOLYMERIZING. YOU'RE MOLECULARLY COMING APART.
Dr. Vera M
CHIEF SCIE
WHOA. HA. OKAY. WHAT'S THE TREATMENT, THEN?
FROM WHAT I CAN TELL, THERE IS NONE. THE SCISSION IS IRREVERSIBLE.
WHAT ARE YOU SAYING?


PATRICK, THE CELLULAR DAMAGE IS CUMULATIVE. THIS WASN'T JUST ONE DEATH RAY.
THE RAY COULD HAVE ACCELERATED THINGS, SURE, BUT THIS COULD ALSO BE THE NATURAL END RESULT OF YOUR ORIGINAL ACCIDENT.
HA!
HAHA!
OKAY! OKAY, DOC-- VERA, RIGHT? IT'S VERA? LET'S BE SERIOUS FOR A SECOND.
I AM BEING SERIOUS.
HA...
YOU ARE A UNIQUE AND SINGULAR ORGANISM. BUT LOOKING AT THE DATA, THIS IS HYPOTHETICALLY HOW AN ORGANISM LIKE YOU WOULD DIE.


OKAY.
I'M DYING.
YES. I BELIEVE SO. I'M SORRY.
I'M DYING.
HILARIOUS.

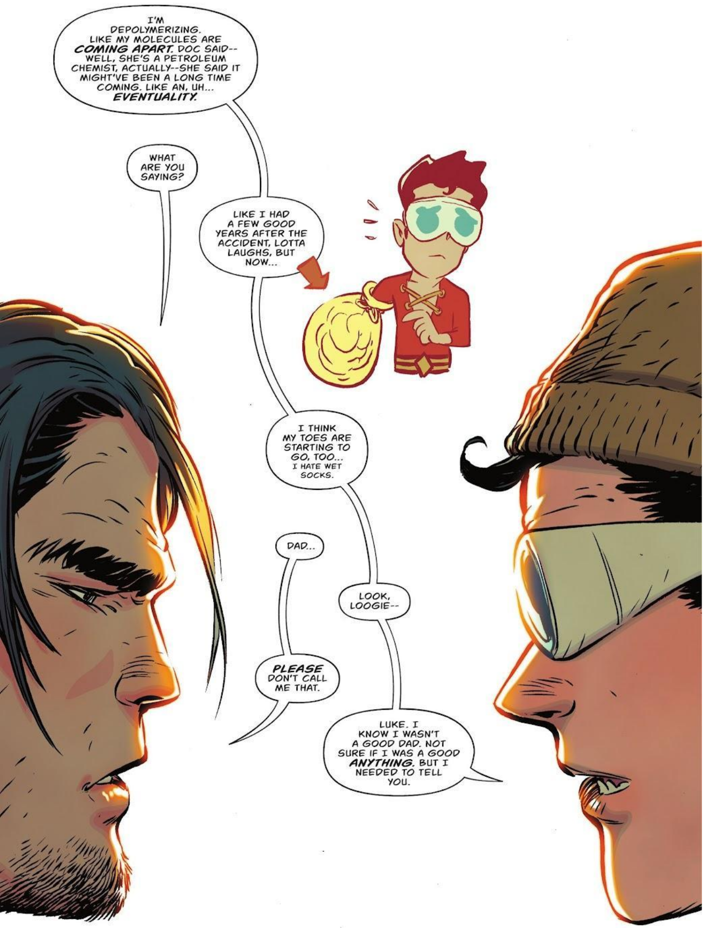

GOTTA CHANGE OUT THE BAG AGAIN. BUT I DON'T WANNA THROW ANY OF MYSELF AWAY.
ALL THE SAME. WHAT'S WORTH KEEPING?
THE JUSTICE LEAGUE SAYS I'M IN, ANGEL. AN' SINCE I'M SUCH A TERRIBLE CROOK, MAYBE I'LL MAKE A HALFWAY-DECENT HERO...
WOW, PATRICK. THAT'S THE BIG TIME! THINGS COULD FINALLY CHANGE FOR US...
FOOL.
HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA!
HEY...! HEY!
SCHMUCK.
PATRICK...I'M PREGNANT.
OH WOW, HE'S JUST...HE'S JUST LIKE HIS OL' MAN...
FREAK.
HERE, I... I GOTTA GO, THE JUSTICE LEAGUE... DUTY CALLS...
PATRICK...?
LOSER.
OH GOD...OH GOD...
COWARD.


IT'S EMPTY, SWEETIE...PATRICK, YOU WANNA GIVE ME A HAND HERE?
WAAAAAAA!
YEAH, SORRY, AS IT TURNS OUT, HONEST WORK'S EVEN HARDER WORK. I'M PRETTY BEAT, ANGEL.
ASSHOLE.
YOU'RE A REAL PIECE OF WORK, O'BRIAN, YOU KNOW THAT?
DADDY!
LATER, KID.
FAILURE.
LUKE.
OH MY GOD.
AH GOD, LUKE...


SKRSHH
SLURSH


DNNG-ING-ING
WHAT DO YOU WANT, DAD?
LUKE, SIT DOWN. IT'S GOOD TO SEE YOU.
C'MON. HAVE A SEAT. PLEASE.
IT'S GOOD TO SEE YOU.
YOU ALREADY SAID THAT.


WHAT'S IT BEEN--
SIX YEARS.
MAN. WELL, YOU KNOW, WITH THE JUSTICE LEAGUE AND ALL...
SURE.
HOW'RE THE TITANS?
C'MON, DAD.
ETRO DINER
FOOD
HOW'S YOUR MOM?
DON'T.
24h
OKAY. OKAY, LOOK, UH...
KID, I'M...IT'S CRAZY.
I THINK I'M DYING.


I'M DEPOLYMERIZING. LIKE MY MOLECULES ARE COMING APART. DOC SAID-- WELL, SHE'S A PETROLEUM CHEMIST, ACTUALLY--SHE SAID IT MIGHT'VE BEEN A LONG TIME COMING. LIKE AN, UH... EVENTUALITY.
WHAT ARE YOU SAYING?
LIKE I HAD A FEW GOOD YEARS AFTER THE ACCIDENT, LOTTA LAUGHS, BUT NOW...
I THINK MY TOES ARE STARTING TO GO, TOO... I HATE WET SOCKS.
DAD...
LOOK, LOOGIE--
PLEASE DON'T CALL ME THAT.
LUKE. I KNOW I WASN'T A GOOD DAD. NOT SURE IF I WAS A GOOD ANYTHING. BUT I NEEDED TO TELL YOU.

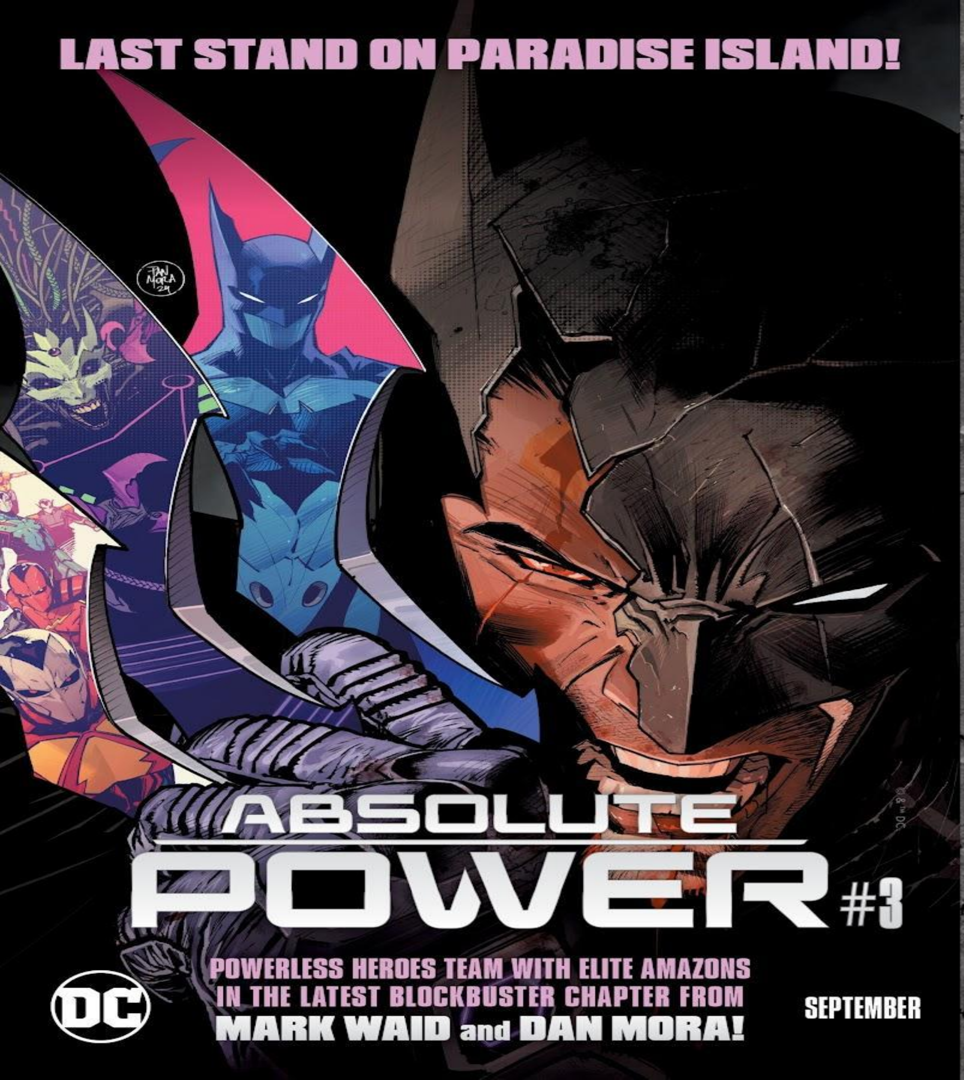

WHY?
BECAUSE YOU'RE MY SON.
IS THAT SO?
PLEASE DON'T HURT ME RIGHT NOW. I DON'T THINK I CAN HANDLE THAT.
COULD THIS...COULD THIS HAPPEN TO ME, TOO?
SEE, THAT'S WHAT I'M WORRIED ABOUT. I WANT YOU TO TALK TO THIS DOCTOR, THIS CHEMIST, MENLO. HAVE HER TAKE A LOOK AT YOU.


NO. NO, I'M NOT DOING THIS.
LISTEN, SON, I HAD A GOOD GO OF IT, OH WELL, BUT I COULDN'T BEAR TO SEE YOU--
DON'T CALL ME THAT, EITHER.
WHAT?
SON. I'M DONE TALKING ABOUT THIS.
AT LEAST PROMISE ME YOU'LL GET CHECKED OUT.
DON'T TELL MOM. I MEAN IT.
LUKE!


MOMMY, DON'T LET GO!
YOU GOT IT, KATIE! YOU GOT IT!
KNOK KNOK
DOC? VERA? YOU IN THERE? I NEED A FAVOR!
SORRY, DID I WAKE THE HOUSE?
NO, THERE'S NO ONE HERE--
IS THERE ANY WAY--HOWEVER THEORY-WISE, THEORY-LIKE, WHAT IS IT, THEORETICAL--THAT THIS DEPOLYMERIZING CRAP CAN BE REVERSED?
I MEAN... THE ONLY THING THAT COULD PERMANENTLY REBIND YOUR POLYMER CHAIN WOULD BE A RADICAL FUSION REACTION OF INCREDIBLE MAGNITUDE.


I DON'T GIVE A FLYIN' FIG ABOUT MY MOLECULES. BUT SAY THERE WAS SOMEONE ELSE. ANOTHER ONE OF THESE UNIQUE, SINGULAR ORGANISMS LIKE ME. WOULD IT WORK ON THEM, TOO?
POSSIBLY. IT COULD HALT AND LIKELY REVERSE ANY MOLECULAR DEGRADATION. THAT IS, IF THEIR GENETIC MAKEUP WAS SIMILAR TO YOURS.
OH, IT'S REAL SIMILAR.
BUT, PATRICK, TO GENERATE THAT SIZE OF FUSION REACTION...
...YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT BUILDING THE MOST POWERFUL THERMONUCLEAR DEVICE IN HISTORY AND SETTING IT OFF WITH YOU--OR, YOU KNOW, THIS UNIQUE, SINGULAR ORGANISM--AT THE EPICENTER OF THE BLAST.
THE LIKELIHOOD OF BEING COMPLETELY OBLITERATED IS MUCH HIGHER THAN ANY CHANCE OF CELLULAR REPAIR.
YOU'RE SAYING I GOTTA BUILD A HUGE NUCLEAR BOMB.


OKAY. SOUNDS GOOD.
LET'S DO THAT.
ONE WAY
TO BE CONTINUED.



JON KENT FIGHTS BACK AS ABSOLUTE POWER CONTINUES







SEPTEMBER:

ABSOLUTE POWER #3

ABSOLUTE POWER: TASK FORCE VII #6

ABSOLUTE POWER: SUPER SON #1

ABSOLUTE POWER: TASK FORCE VII #7

ABSOLUTE POWER: ORIGINS #3

TIE-INS:

BATMAN #152

GREEN LANTERN #15

SUPERMAN #18

WONDER WOMAN #13

GREEN ARROW #16







DC

DON'T MISS THE FATEFUL FINALE IN OCTOBER!

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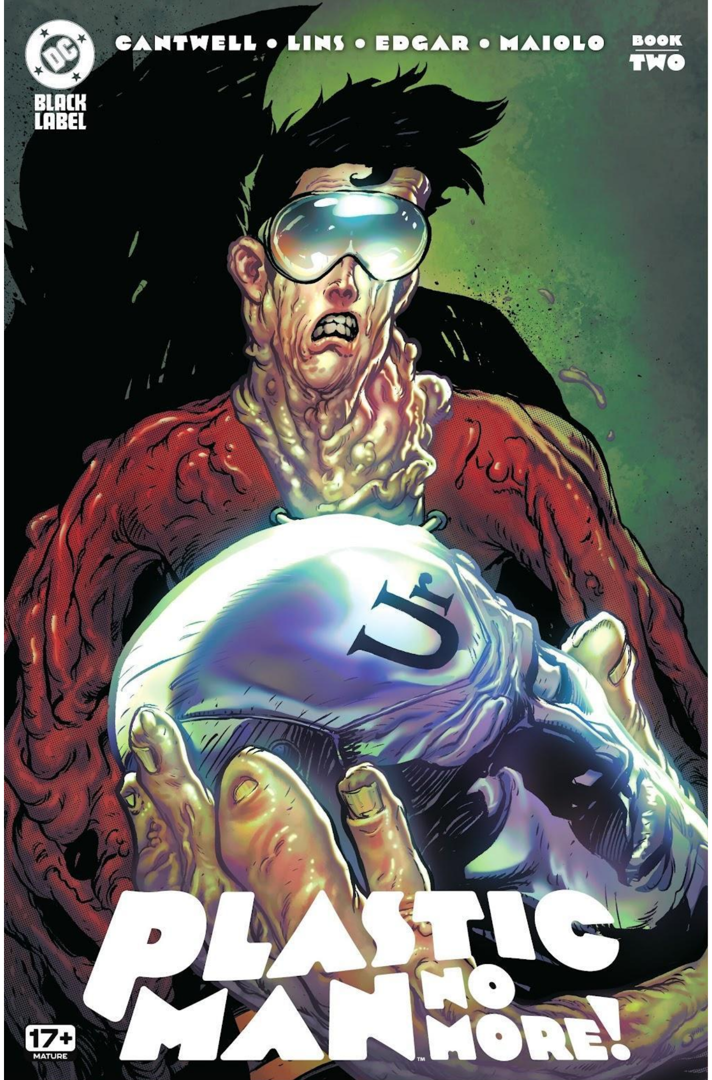
"EEL, MY FRIEND...WHY AIN'T YOU LAUGHIN'?"



Eel O'Brian might be a superhero now—but before he was anything else, he was a crook. Until the accident that turned him into the pliable Plastic Man, Eel was bad to the bone...and just because he no longer has bones doesn't mean that's not still true. When an incident on a Justice League mission leads to catastrophic cellular damage, Plastic Man discovers he just might be out of time to make amends for the past he's tried hard to outrun—or to save the soul of his son, who (unfortunately for him) might have inherited more from dear old Dad than just his superpowers...

The Eisner Award-nominated creative team of Christopher Cantwell (*Briar, Doctor Doom, Halt and Catch Fire*) and Alex Lins (*Monarch*) brings you the five words you thought you'd never read: body-horror Plastic Man noir!

COVER BY ALEX LINS & MARCELO MAIOLO


CANTWELL • LINS • EDGAR • MAIOLO
BOOK TWO
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PLASTIC MAN NO MORE!
17+
MATURE

PLASTIC MAN NO MORE!

BOOK TWO

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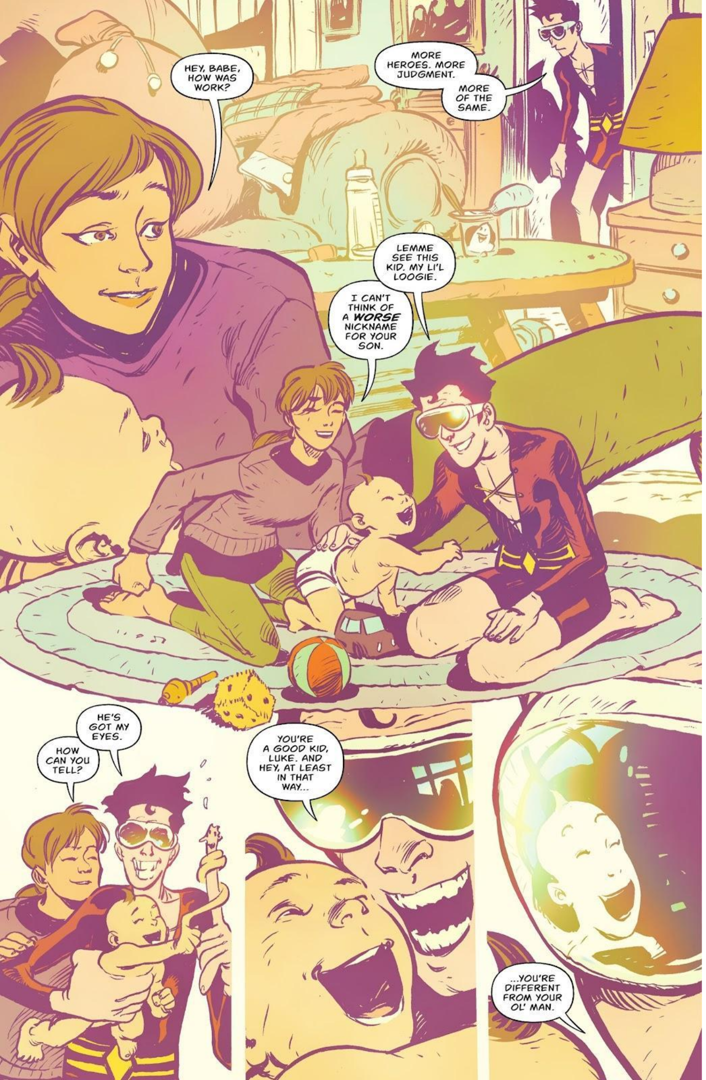
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COVER

RILEY ROSSMO
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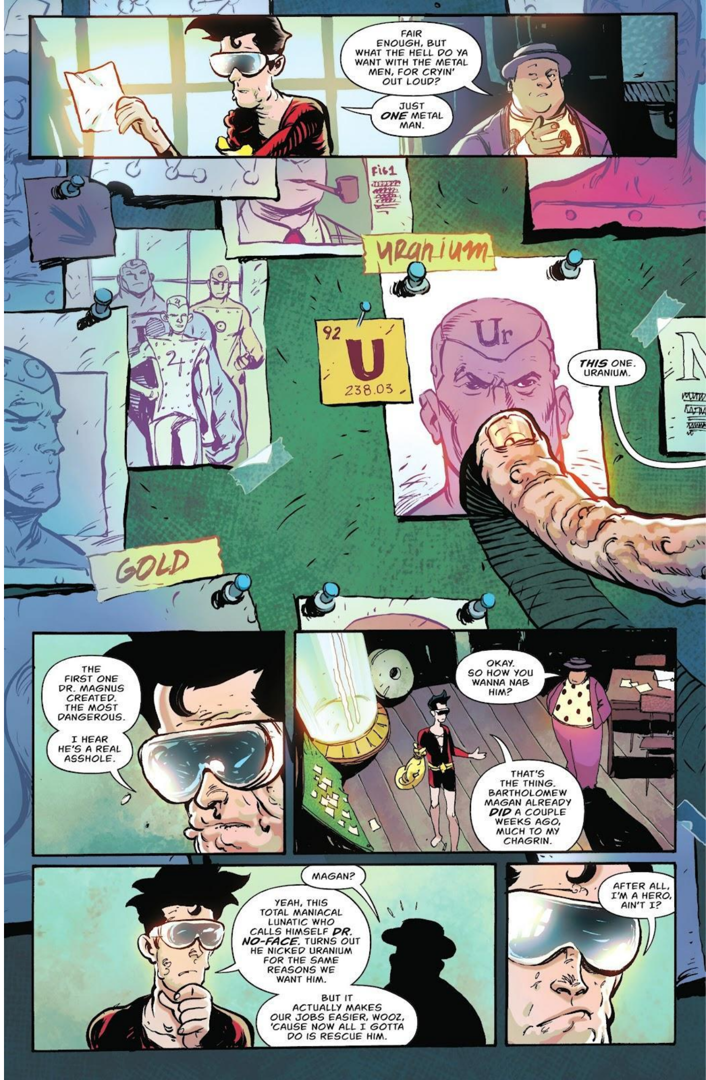

Some time ago.
REX, WHILE YOU'RE HERE, WE WANTED YOU TO MEET PLASTIC MAN, OUR NEWEST JUSTICE LEAGUE MEMBER.
REAL PLEASURE.
YOU KNOW, THERE'S ACTUALLY A NEAT BIT OF OVERLAP BETWEEN HIS ABILITIES AND YOURS.
I DOUBT IT.
METAMORPHO, RIGHT?
THE GUY WHO CAN TURN HIS ASS INTO AN ARMCHAIR.


DIDN'T REALIZE THE JLA WAS IN SUCH DESPERATE NEED OF COMIC RELIEF.
LIKE I SAID. REAL PLEASURE.
HEY, WHY DON'T WE, UH...
...SHOW YOU THE INVISIBLE JET OR SOMETHING...


HEY, BABE, HOW WAS WORK?
MORE HEROES. MORE JUDGMENT.
MORE OF THE SAME.
LEMME SEE THIS KID. MY LI'L LOOGIE.
I CAN'T THINK OF A ***WORSE*** NICKNAME FOR YOUR SON.
HE'S GOT MY EYES.
HOW CAN YOU TELL?
YOU'RE A GOOD KID, LUKE. AND HEY, AT LEAST IN THAT WAY...
...YOU'RE DIFFERENT FROM YOUR OL' MAN.


NOW.
EEL, MY FRIEND, YOU DON'T LOOK TOO GOOD.
YEAH, WELL, WOOZY, I DON'T ***FEEL*** TOO GOOD, EITHER.
HOW YOU EVEN HOLDIN' YOURSELF TOGETHER AT ALL?
SHEER WILL. BUT IT'S GETTING HARDER EVERY DAY.
HENCE THE PLAN.


I WANNA HELP YOU.
YOU ARE HELPING ME, WOOZY.
BUT THIS IS A HEIST, EEL. THIS IS A DANG KIDNAPPING. THIS IS THE OL' DAYS. WHY YOU WANNA MESS AROUND WITH THIS GARBAGE?
'CAUSE I GOT NO OTHER OPTIONS.
C'MON, YOU GOT THE JUSTICE LEAGUE! YOU GOT FRIENDS IN HIGH PLACES. YOU GOT--
THE LEAGUE THINKS I'M A JOKE. ALWAYS HAS.
I GOT NO OTHER OPTION.
I JUS' DON'T SEE HOW YOU SAVE YOURSELF BY GOIN' CROOKED AGAIN. NOT AFTER ALL YOU BEEN THROUGH.
THIS ISN'T ABOUT ME.
THIS IS ABOUT LUKE. THIS IS ABOUT MAKING SURE THE SAME THING DOESN'T HAPPEN TO HIM.

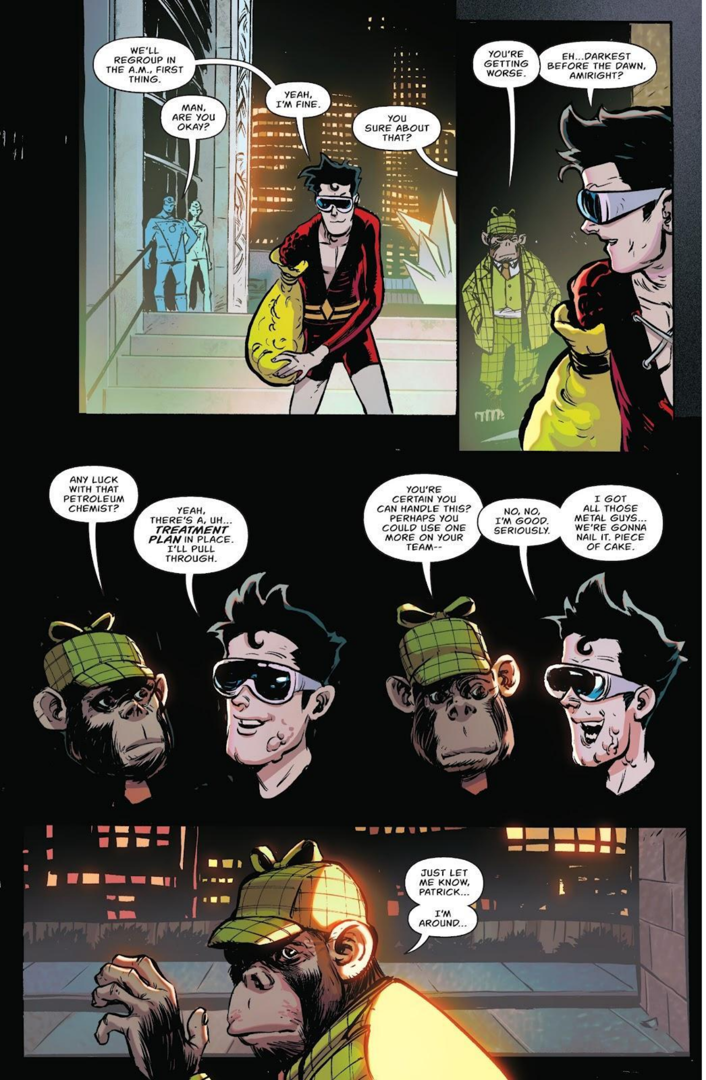

FAIR ENOUGH, BUT WHAT THE HELL DO YA WANT WITH THE METAL MEN, FOR CRYIN' OUT LOUD?
JUST ONE METAL MAN.
URANIUM
92
U
238.03
Ur
THIS ONE. URANIUM.
GOLD
THE FIRST ONE DR. MAGNUS CREATED. THE MOST DANGEROUS.
I HEAR HE'S A REAL ASSHOLE.
OKAY. SO HOW YOU WANNA NAB HIM?
THAT'S THE THING. BARTHOLOMEW MAGAN ALREADY DID A COUPLE WEEKS AGO, MUCH TO MY CHAGRIN.
MAGAN?
YEAH, THIS TOTAL MANIACAL LUNATIC WHO CALLS HIMSELF DR. NO-FACE. TURNS OUT HE NICKED URANIUM FOR THE SAME REASONS WE WANT HIM.
BUT IT ACTUALLY MAKES OUR JOBS EASIER, WOOZ, 'CAUSE NOW ALL I GOTTA DO IS RESCUE HIM.
AFTER ALL, I'M A HERO, AIN'T I?


GEE, EEL, WE STOLE A LOTTA THINGS TOGETHER, BUT NEVER NO *SENTIENT FISSILE* MATERIAL.
IT'S GOTTA BE HIM. HE'S THE ONLY KNOWN AMOUNT LARGE ENOUGH TO CREATE THE KIND OF BOMB I NEED.
GEE, WE AIN'T NEVER DONE THAT, NEITHER.
FIRST TIME FOR EVERYTHING, I GUESS.
SKRCH SKRCH
EVEN IF IT WORKS, WHAT HAPPENS TO HIM? URANIUM? YOU USE HIM ALL UP AN' WHAT? HE DIES?
NO, NO, NO, NO.
IF THERE'S EVEN A TRACE AMOUNT LEFT OF THE GUY, MAGNUS CAN REGENERATE HIM. HE'S DONE IT WITH ALL THE METAL MEN *ZILLIONS* OF TIMES. THEY BASICALLY CAN'T DIE.
BUT I CAN.
AND SO CAN LUKE.


I'LL BE HONEST. THIS RESCUE OPERATION IS HIGH-RISK. BUT THAT'S WHY I'VE ENLISTED THE REST OF THE METAL MEN TO AID ME IN THIS MISSION.
WEAPONS REFINERY
SNIFF
WE ARE DEEPLY COMMITTED TO BRINGING OUR BROTHER URANIUM HOME AND PREVENTING DR. NO-FACE FROM WEAPONIZING HIM.
THIS, UH...*AHEM*... DESPITE THE FACT THAT URANIUM'S PRETTY MUCH A, WELL, YOU KNOW, SOCIOPATH AND-- I MEAN--HATES ALL OF US.
IN THE WRONG HANDS, URANIUM COULD BE USED FOR SOMETHING AWFUL. SOMETHING *DEADLY*. I JUST NEED JUSTICE LEAGUE SIGN-OFF AND WE'RE GOOD TO GO.
SNIFF
URANIUM THEFT. SERIOUS.
BY DR. NO-FACE NO LESS.
I THINK IT'S JUST "DR. NO-FACE," RIGHT? NOT "NO-FACE NO-LESS."
NO, I JUST MEANT--


AAAAAAAGHOO
AH GOD.

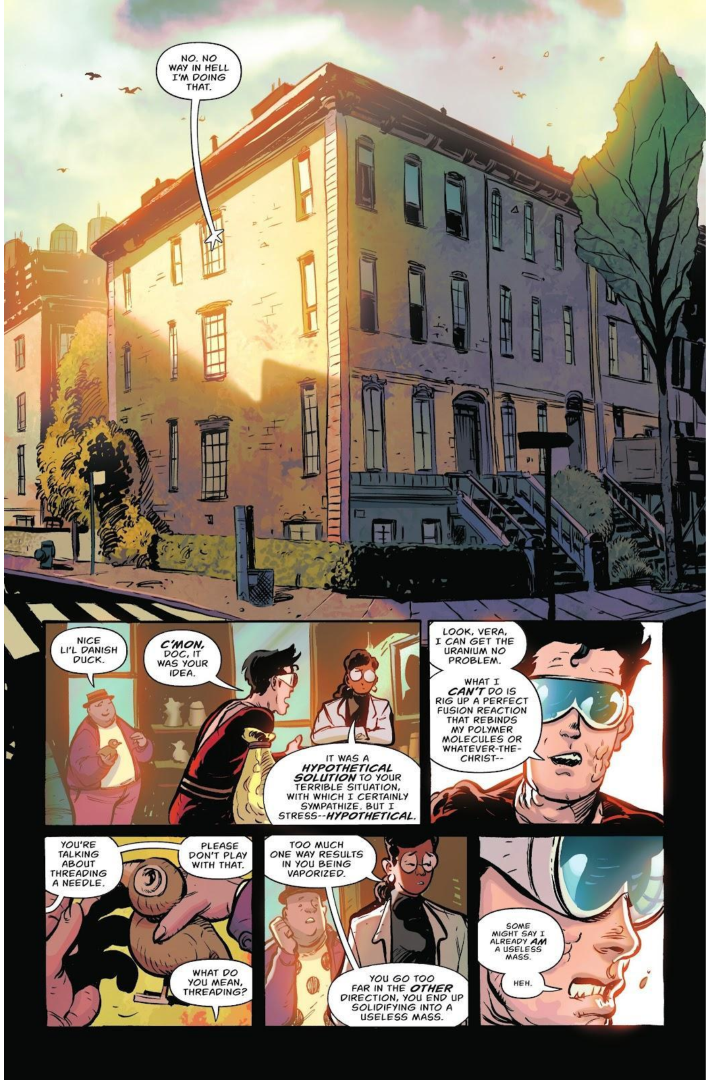

SOMEBODY GET THE MAINTENANCE ROBOT IN HERE.
YOU GUYS LIKE MY JACKSON POLLOCK IMPRESSION?
HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA!
CRIPES, I'M SORRY. I'M REAL SORRY ABOUT THAT.
I JUST NEED THE GREEN LIGHT AND I'LL BE OUT OF YOUR HAIR.
ARE YOU SURE YOU'RE UP TO THIS? EVEN WITH THE METAL MEN AS BACKUP, SUCCESS NEEDS TO BE GUARANTEED.
THE LEAGUE IS STRETCHED THIN, BUT I'M SURE WE COULD SPARE MORE MEMBERS FOR SOME-THING THIS IMPORTANT.
WE SET OFF TOO MANY FIREWORKS, NO-FACE AND URANIUM COULD SLIP THROUGH THE NET. LIKE MY DAD USED TO SAY, BEST WAY TO HIT A BULLSEYE IS BY THROWING ONE GOOD DART.
I GOT THIS, FELLAS.
WEAPONS
IT'S A SALIENT POINT.
APPROVED. BUT WE'RE ON STANDBY FOR SUPPORT. GOOD LUCK.


WE'LL REGROUP IN THE A.M., FIRST THING.
MAN, ARE YOU OKAY?
YEAH, I'M FINE.
YOU SURE ABOUT THAT?
YOU'RE GETTING WORSE.
EH...DARKEST BEFORE THE DAWN, AMIRIGHT?
ANY LUCK WITH THAT PETROLEUM CHEMIST?
YEAH, THERE'S A, UH... TREATMENT PLAN IN PLACE. I'LL PULL THROUGH.
YOU'RE CERTAIN YOU CAN HANDLE THIS? PERHAPS YOU COULD USE ONE MORE ON YOUR TEAM--
NO, NO, I'M GOOD. SERIOUSLY.
I GOT ALL THOSE METAL GUYS... WE'RE GONNA NAIL IT. PIECE OF CAKE.
JUST LET ME KNOW, PATRICK...
I'M AROUND...


MAMMOTH CITY BOARDWALK.
NO MORE BETS.
RED 27.
HEY YO, ANGIE. PHONE. CHANGE OUT AND MAKE IT QUICK.
YEAH?
MOM, IT'S ME.
LUKE? WHAT'S GOING ON? YOU PULLED ME OFF THE DAMN FLOOR.
IT'S, UM. IT'S DAD.
NOPE, NUH-UH, I'M NOT DOIN' THIS TODAY--
MOM, HE'S IN TROUBLE.
LIKE I GIVE A SHIT. HOW MANY TIMES WE BEEN IN TROUBLE, YOU AN' ME?

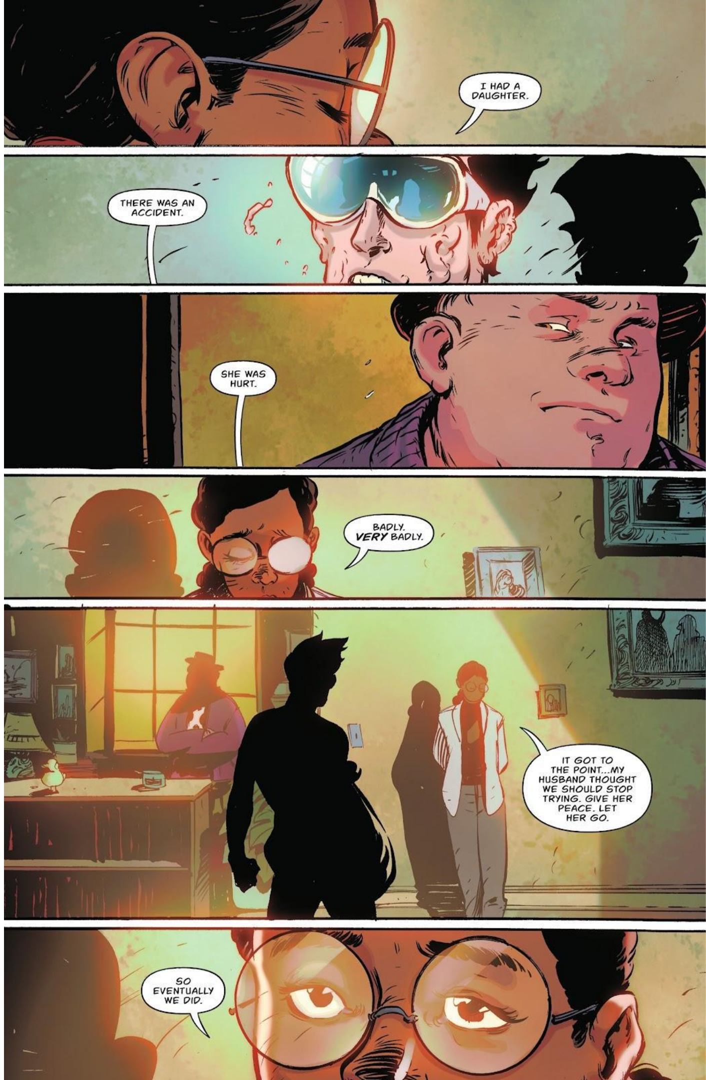


PLENTY.
AN' WHERE WAS HE?
NOWHERE.
YOU'RE GODDAMN RIGHT. AS FAR AS I'M CONCERNED, HE'S DEAD TO ME.
THAT'S THE THING, MOM...
HUH?
...
LUKE, WHAT THE FUCK ARE YOU SAYING TO ME RIGHT NOW?
...
LISTEN, I... I GOTTA GET BACK TO THE FLOOR.
CLICK



NO. NO WAY IN HELL I'M DOING THAT.
NICE LI'L DANISH DUCK.
C'MON, DOC, IT WAS YOUR IDEA.
IT WAS A HYPOTHETICAL SOLUTION TO YOUR TERRIBLE SITUATION, WITH WHICH I CERTAINLY SYMPATHIZE. BUT I STRESS--HYPOTHETICAL.
LOOK, VERA, I CAN GET THE URANIUM NO PROBLEM.
WHAT I CAN'T DO IS RIG UP A PERFECT FUSION REACTION THAT REBINDS MY POLYMER MOLECULES OR WHATEVER-THE-CHRIST--
YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT THREADING A NEEDLE.
PLEASE DON'T PLAY WITH THAT.
WHAT DO YOU MEAN, THREADING?
TOO MUCH ONE WAY RESULTS IN YOU BEING VAPORIZED.
YOU GO TOO FAR IN THE OTHER DIRECTION, YOU END UP SOLIDIFYING INTO A USELESS MASS.
SOME MIGHT SAY I ALREADY AM A USELESS MASS.
HEH.


I CAN'T HELP YOU.
I'M SORRY. YOU SHOULD LEAVE NOW.
I ALREADY TOLD YOU THIS ISN'T FOR ME. THIS IS FOR MY SON.
IF THERE'S ANY CHANCE HE HAS THE SAME THING THAT'S HAPPENING TO ME, OR COULD EVER...
I NEED HIM TO STAY GOOD AND STRONG.
I KNOW YOU DON'T HAVE KIDS, SO YOU MIGHT NOT UNDERSTAND HOW I FEEL, BUT...
WHAT'D I SAY? HOW'D I PUT MY FOOT IN MY MOUTH NOW?


I HAD A DAUGHTER.
THERE WAS AN ACCIDENT.
SHE WAS HURT.
BADLY. VERY BADLY.
IT GOT TO THE POINT...MY HUSBAND THOUGHT WE SHOULD STOP TRYING. GIVE HER PEACE. LET HER GO.
SO EVENTUALLY WE DID.


BUT NOT A DAY GOES BY...
...I DON'T WONDER.
WONDER WHAT?
WHAT ELSE I COULD HAVE DONE.
I'M GONNA HAVE THAT URANIUM BY TOMORROW. AND I'VE ALREADY FOUND AN UNPOPULATED AREA TO DO THIS.
NO ONE'LL GET HURT.


"I PROMISE."
HEY. YOU OKAY?
YOU HAVEN'T SEEMED YOURSELF THESE LAST FEW DAYS. THE TITANS HAVE NOTICED.
I'M SORRY. I'M FINE. JUST...
...TROUBLE WITH MY DAD.


LOOK. WHEN IT COMES TO FATHERS...
...I GET IT.


I HATE FACES.
ALL FACES.
ALL FACES MUST BE DESTROYED.
BECAUSE THEY ARE LIES.
THEY SHOW YOU ONE THING BUT REVEAL NOTHING OF AN INDIVIDUAL'S TRUE NATURE.
FACES ARE JUST MASKS.


ANY MASK--EVEN ONE YOU'RE BORN WITH--IS BY ITS VERY NATURE *FALSE*.
TRUTH LIES *UNDER* THE MASK.
BUUUUUUUUUUUULL-SHIT.
BULLSHIT? YOU THINK THIS IS *BULLSHIT?* YOU CALL THIS MASSIVE WEAPONS REFINERY BULLSHIT?
YOU THINK THAT SUPER-COMPUTER BACK THERE AUTOMATING BLUEPRINTS FOR A UNIQUE AND SOPHISTICATED BOMB CASING AND TRIGGER MECHANISM BULLSHIT?
I'LL TELL YOU WHAT'S BULLSHIT. MOUNT RUSHMORE IS BULLSHIT.


MOUNT RUSHMORE BEARS THE FACES OF IMPERIALISTS AND CONQUERORS.
IT'S BULLSHIT. AND I WILL ANNIHILATE IT, USING YOU, URANIUM, TO DETONATE MY TRUTH UPON THE WORLD.
CHECK THAT OUT. *CANASTA*.
I THINK YOU'RE JUST JEALOUS.
I THINK YOUR WHOLE M.O. IS BASICALLY, "IF I DON'T GET A FACE, NO ONE GETS A FACE."
IT'S PROBABLY BECAUSE YOU FEEL LIKE YOU LACK ANY REAL IDENTITY OF YOUR OWN.
WHICH IN TURN FUELS SOME DEEPER NEUROSIS WHERE YOU WONDER IF YOU EVEN EXIST.


SO YOU USE VIOLENCE AND TERROR TO PROVE TO THE REST OF THE WORLD THAT YOU'RE REAL.
WHICH IS JUST SAD AND PATHETIC.
AND YOU KNOW WHAT? I BET YOU'D BE EVEN MORE INTOLERABLE IF YOU HAD YOUR FACE BACK.
OKAY. I DIDN'T KIDNAP YOU TO BE THERAPIZED.
I KIDNAPPED YOU SO I COULD TURN YOU INTO FOUR HUNDRED POUNDS OF PURE U-235.
...DICKHEAD.


WWWCCCH
HRAAAH!
WOW. GIVES NEW MEANING TO GOING OVER LIKE A LEAD BALLOON.
METAL MEN! ATTACK!


WE'LL GIVE THEM COVER WHILE GOLD FINDS AN EXIT!
THEN LET'S PLAY THE HITS!
KATAK
KATAK
KATAK
KATAK
STAY BACK! I KNOW GOLD HAS A LOW MELTING POINT!
NOT *THAT* LOW, MAGAN...
WOOZY. YOU COPY?
YEAH, EEL, I'M UP TOP.
ONCE I GET HIM OUT, WE GET HIM IN THE TRUCK, AND WE'RE GONE.
YOU GOT IT.


LOOK AT THIS, METAL AND PLASTIC, WORKIN' TOGETHER.
MORE FACES... **MORE LIES!**
THROW IN SOME GLASS AND CARDBOARD AND WE'RE FULLY RECYCLABLE.
YOU KNOW, UH, IT'S, I GOTTA SAY, SO FUNNY HE SAID THAT, ABOUT THE MELTING POINT, BECAUSE MINE IS, WELL, IT'S--I MEAN IT'S SIGNIFICANTLY LOWER.
OOF!
I GOT 'IM!
CHK CHK CHK
METAL MEN, LET'S MOVE!


YOU KNOW, PLASTIC'S NOT REALLY RECYCLABLE. IT'S ALL A CON JOB PERPETRATED BY CORPORATE AMERICA.
YEAH, I HEARD YOU WERE A REAL JOY.
NICE GOIN', LEAD...
IT'S GOOD TO SEE YOU, BROTHER.
I'VE ALWAYS HATED YOU. ALL OF YOU. FOR AS LONG AS I CAN REMEMBER.
I DON'T KNOW WHY I EXPECTED RESCUING HIM TO BE ANY DIFFERENT.
NOW, WOOZY!


AWRIGHT, METAL MEN! MEET SOME MAGNET!
WHAT THE...
HRRRRRK!
WHY'S IT ONLY WORKING ON HIM?
NONE OF THE REST OF US IS MAGNETIC.
DID YOU NOT LOOK THAT UP?
WOULDA TAKEN TWO SECONDS.
BUT YOU'RE METAL...


WHAT'S GOING ON HERE? WHAT ARE YOU TRYING TO PULL?
LOOK, I NEED URANIUM. I JUST--NEED TO BORROW HIM.
ARE YOU IN LEAGUE WITH NO-FACE? ANSWER ME!
NO! NO-- ACK-- OF COURSE NOT!
WOOZY, TRY SOMETHING ELSE! THIS ISN'T WORKING!
LIKE WHAT?
I DON'T KNOW, ANYTHING!
JESUS, EEL, I DON'T EVEN KNOW HOW ANY OF THIS SHIT WORKS!
CRACKKK

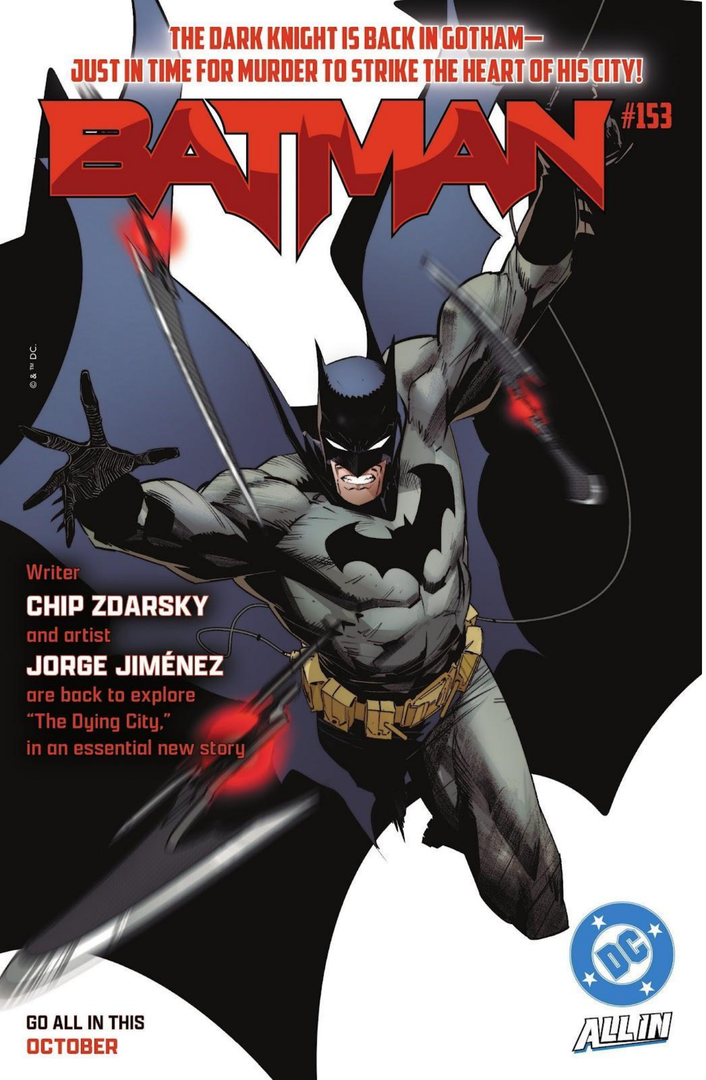

HNNNNNGGGH!
NOOOOOO!



AAAAAAAAAGGHH!
AH GOD...
WOW. YOU KILLED THEM.
YOU KILLED THEM ALL.



NO WAY. YOU SAID THEY CAN'T DIE. IF THERE'S EVEN JUST A LITTLE BIT LEFT, THEY CAN BE REGENERATED...
YOU SAID IT'S BEEN DONE ZILLIONS OF TIMES. THEY'RE NOT DEAD.
I DIDN'T KILL 'EM. THEY'RE NOT DEAD. RIGHT, EEL?
RIGHT?
RIGHT?!
"NO ONE'LL GET HURT.
"I PROMISE."
TO BE CONTINUED.



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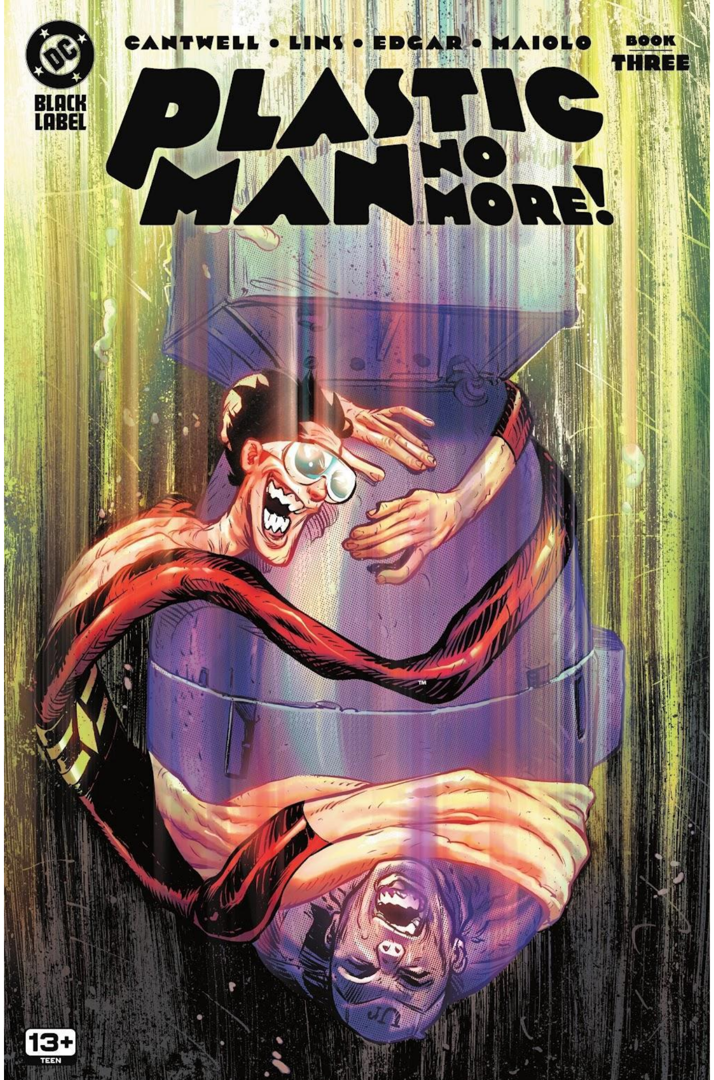
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CANTWELL • LINS • EDGAR • MAIOLO
BOOK THREE
DC
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PLASTIC MAN NO MORE!
13+ TEEN

PLASTIC MAN NO MORE!

BOOK THREE

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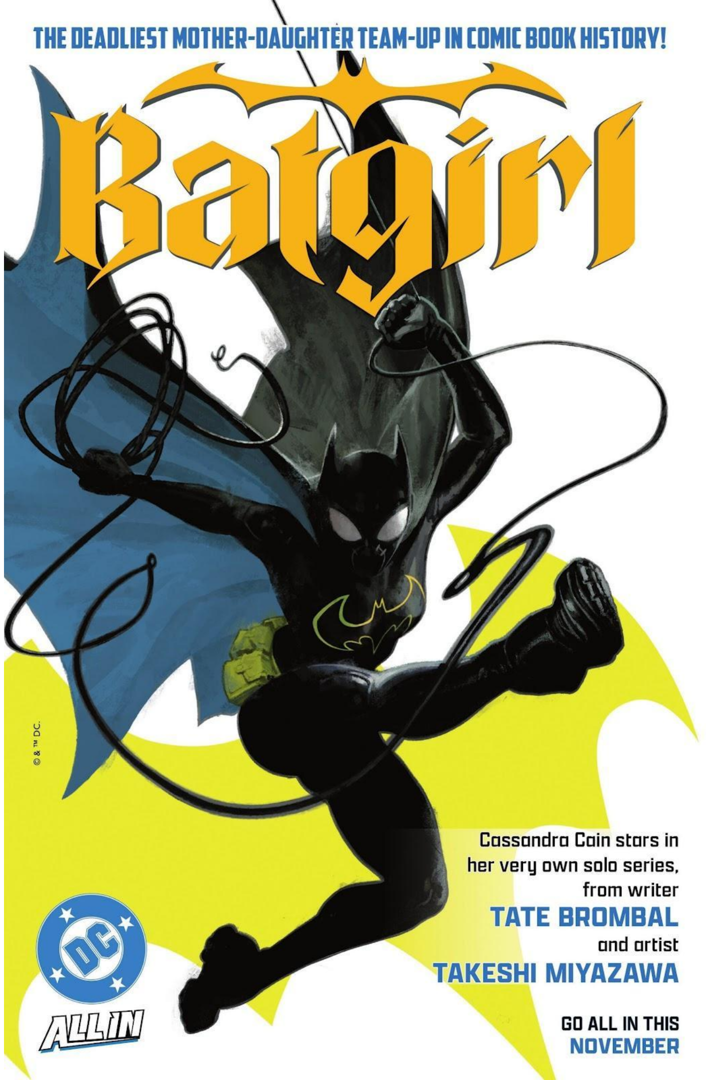
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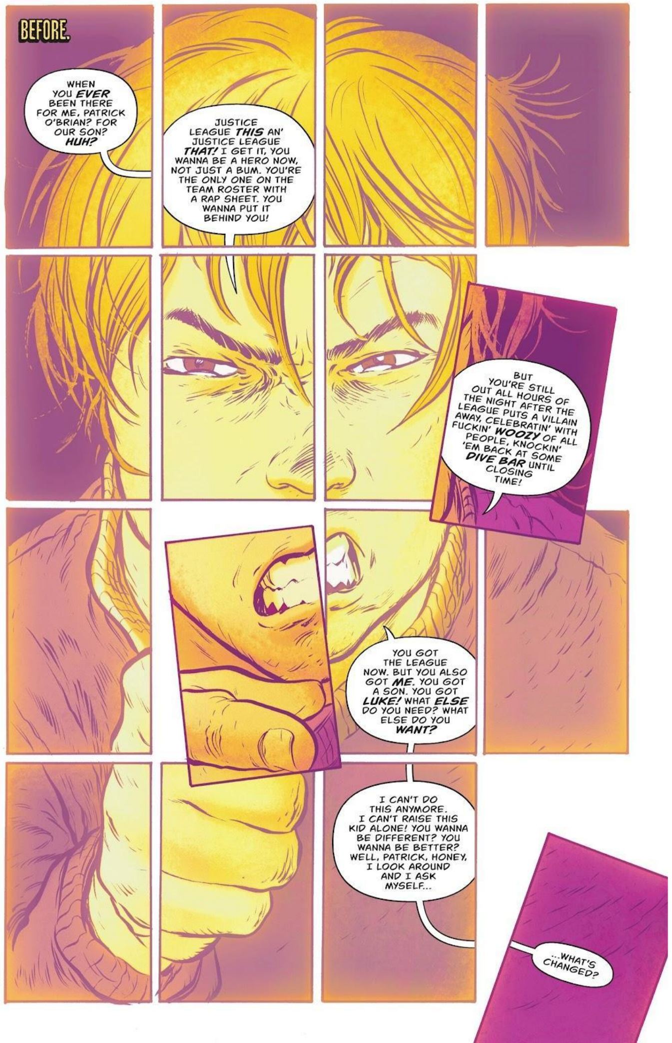
ALEX LINS & MARCELO MAIOLO
COVER

ARTÍN MORAZZO & CHRIS O'HALLORAN
VARIANT COVER

SUPERMAN CREATED BY **JERRY SIEGEL** AND **JOE SHUSTER**
BY SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT WITH **THE JERRY SIEGEL FAMILY**

BLACK LABEL




BEFORE.
WHEN YOU **EVER** BEEN THERE FOR ME, PATRICK O'BRIAN? FOR OUR SON? **HUH?**
JUSTICE LEAGUE **THIS** AN' JUSTICE LEAGUE **THAT!** I GET IT, YOU WANNA BE A HERO NOW, NOT JUST A BUM. YOU'RE THE ONLY ONE ON THE TEAM ROSTER WITH A RAP SHEET. YOU WANNA PUT IT BEHIND YOU!
BUT YOU'RE STILL OUT ALL HOURS OF THE NIGHT AFTER THE LEAGUE PUTS A VILLAIN AWAY, CELEBRATIN' WITH FUCKIN' **WOOZY** OF ALL PEOPLE, KNOCKIN' 'EM BACK AT SOME **DIVE BAR** UNTIL CLOSING TIME!
YOU GOT THE LEAGUE NOW. BUT YOU ALSO GOT **ME**. YOU GOT A SON. YOU GOT **LUKE!** WHAT **ELSE** DO YOU NEED? WHAT ELSE DO YOU **WANT?**
I CAN'T DO THIS ANYMORE. I CAN'T RAISE THIS KID ALONE! YOU WANNA BE DIFFERENT? YOU WANNA BE BETTER? WELL, PATRICK, HONEY, I LOOK AROUND AND I ASK MYSELF...
...WHAT'S CHANGED?


NOW.
AHEM
LADIES AND GENTLEMEN...
...WE GOT 'EM.
URANIUM-- THE INDIVIDUAL-- HAS BEEN RECOVERED SAFE AND SOUND.
DR. NO-FACE'S PLANS TO BUILD A THERMONUCLEAR BOMB AND DESTROY MOUNT RUSHMORE HAVE BEEN AVERTED. HE MAY ESCAPED FOR NO REFINERY OPERA BEEN COMPL DESTROYED.
WHAT ARE WE DOING FOR DINNER TONIGHT? SUSHI?
TOO COLD FOR SUSHI. RAMEN?
REGRETTABLY, ALL OF THE METAL MEN WERE KILLED IN THE OPERATION.
HOLD ON. WHAT WAS THAT LAST PART?


WE, UH... WE LOST THE METAL MEN.
THERE WAS A CATWALK COLLAPSE. THEY ALL WENT INTO THE DRINK. "THE DRINK" BEING...VATS OF MOLTEN STEEL.
WAIT. THE METAL MEN ARE DEAD?
ALL OF THEM?
ARE YOU SAYING THIS WAS DR. NO-FACE'S DOING? OR MERELY A RANDOM ACCIDENT INVOLVING THE INFRASTRUCTURE OF THE FACILITY?
WELL, HOLD ON. WE GOT URANIUM OUT--THAT WAS THE OBJECTIVE. HE'S STILL ALIVE--
BUT YOU LOST THE ENTIRE EXFILTRATION TEAM IN THE PROCESS.
AND WHO IS "WE"? YOU'RE THE ONLY ONE WHO SURVIVED.
DANG.
MESSED UP.
OKAY, DO I LOOK LIKE A RUSTY SUPPORT BOLT ON A CATWALK? I DIDN'T LOSE ANYBODY! I AVERTED A RADIOACTIVE CATASTROPHE!


WELL, WHICH IS IT, PATRICK? YOU CLAIM THE CREDIT FOR THE MISSION OBJECTIVE'S SUCCESS, BUT ABSOLVE YOURSELF OF RESPONSIBILITY WHEN IT COMES TO THE METAL MEN'S DEMISE--
OOOOKAY, I'VE ABOUT HAD IT WITH YOU GUYS. IT SEEMS I'M ALWAYS THE LAUGHING BOY OR THE WHIPPING BOY, AND SOMETIMES I'M BOTH.
I'M SICK OF IT.
DOES ANYBODY REMEMBER THAT I'M DYING? OR DID THAT JUST SLIP YOUR MINDS?
I'VE PUT YEARS INTO THIS GROUP OF SELF-IMPORTANT YAHOOS, AND WHAT'S IT GOTTEN ME?
PRECISELY ZERO RESPECT AND A MELTING GODDAMNED BODY.
YA KNOW WHAT? YOU CAN TAKE THIS JUSTICE LEAGUE AND STICK IT UP YOUR ASS.


I QUIT! 'SIDES, I HAD A CRUDDY PARKING SPACE ANYWAY!
WE NEED TO CALL DOCTOR MAGNUS IMMEDIATELY. LOSING THE METAL MEN IS...
PATRICK--
SO MUCH FOR US LOOKIN' OUT FOR EACH OTHER, EH, CHIMP?


MAMMOTH CITY.
"THIS IS QUITE A GROUP OF LIMITED INTELLECTS AND MURDERERS.
YOU KNOW, I NEVER FANCIED MYSELF A GUY WITH A PARTICULARLY STRONG MORAL COMPASS, BUT I GOTTA SAY, I AM PRETTY BOWLED OVER THAT YOU KILLED MY ENTIRE FAMILY.
NOT THAT I EVER LIKED THEM VERY MUCH. BUT STILL.
ALTHOUGH I WONDER IF YOU'VE EVEN GOT THE I.Q. TO APPRECIATE WHAT YOU DID, LITTLE BUDDY. YOU DON'T STRIKE ME AS A MASTERMIND, IF YOU GET MY DRIFT?
NOT THAT YOU SEEM PARTICULARLY BRIGHT EITHER, DR. MENLO. EVEN FOR A SCIENTIST.
YOU LOCKED ME UP IN THIS NICE SQUEEZE-BOX, BUT YOU CLEARLY DON'T KNOW WHAT THE HELL YOU'RE DOING, EITHER. DO YOU?


OKAY. WELL, I JUST QUIT THE JUSTICE LEAGUE.
WHAT? WHY?
I DON'T FEEL MUCH LIKE A HERO ANYMORE, WOOZY. ESPECIALLY AFTER EVERYTHING THAT'S HAPPENED.
PROBABLY FOR THE BEST.
AN' WHY'S THAT, URANIUM, OL' PAL?
FACE IT, PLASTIC MAN. YOU'RE AN ALSO-RAN. YOU'RE IN WAY OVER YOUR HEAD. BUT YOU KIND OF ALWAYS HAVE BEEN, HAVEN'T YOU?
TOUGH TALK.
I'D EVEN VENTURE TO SAY YOUR USE OF HUMOR IS A CHEAP DEFENSE MECHANISM THAT COVERS UP A DEEP WELL OF INSECURITY.
AND I BET THE ANTICS HAVE COME AT THE COST OF ANY KIND OF REAL HUMAN DEPTH. AM I RIGHT?
I'D HATE TO BE THERE WHEN THE JOKES STOP.
I NEED TO TALK TO YOU, PATRICK. IN PRIVATE.


WHAT IS IT, VERA--
HOLD ON, I NEED TO OPEN A WINDOW. AS YOU DEPOLYMERIZE, IT SEEMS YOU'VE BEGUN TO RELEASE A POTENT ETHYLENE GAS. WE NEED MORE VENTILATION.
GASSY, TOO. WHAT A WEEK.
LISTEN, PATRICK, URANIUM MAY BE A COMPLETE DICK, BUT HE HAS A POINT.
I'M OUT OF MY DEPTH. I MUST CONFESS, I HAVE NO IDEA HOW TO REFINE THAT KIND OF SENTIENT BIOREACTIVE ISOTOPE, ***LET ALONE*** BUILD THE MECHANISM NEEDED TO DETONATE IT IN THE WAY WE NEED TO IN ORDER TO REBIND YOUR MOLECULAR STRUCTURE.
SORRY, I LOST YOU AFTER "I CONFESS."
I'M ***SAYING*** WE ARE IN DIRE NEED OF MORE SCIENTIFIC KNOW-HOW AND RAW MATERIAL...
DON'T WORRY, DOC.
I THINK I KNOW SOMEBODY.


CASE FILE 807, DEATH OF THE METAL MEN.
CHECKING OVER EVIDENCE AT THE DEFUNCT REFINERY SITE ONCE RUN BY DR. NO-FACE.
SPLASH IMPACT ON THE WALL FROM THE MOLTEN VATS. SEEING TRACE ELEMENTS OF OTHER METALS IN ADDITION TO COMMON STEEL.
WILL TAKE BACK SAMPLES TO THE JUSTICE LEAGUE LAB AND CHECK FOR SIGNS OF GOLD, PLATINUM, IRON, AND TIN.
CATWALK SUPPORTS SEEM TO HAVE RUPTURED FROM THE CEILING AND WALL, WHICH CORROBORATES PLASTIC MAN'S REPORT.
NO-FACE IS STILL AT LARGE. APPREHENSION EFFORTS ARE CURRENTLY UNDER-WAY. WOULD LIKE TO QUESTION HIM AS A WITNESS.


OKAY.
THERE'S A LARGE MAGNET ON THE ROOF.
GOING TO DUST IT FOR PRINTS.


SKRSHH
EEEEEEEEEEE
"WHAT HAPPENED TO YOUR HAND?"


TITANS TOWER.
I DUNNO.
WELL, I DON'T KNOW IF LUKE WANTS TO SEE YOU RIGHT NOW. I THINK HE NEEDS SOME SPACE.
HEY, KID, I'M JUST TRYING TO HELP HIM.
NO, YOU'RE JUST LIKE BRUCE. YOU BREAK WHATEVER YOU WANT BECAUSE YOU'RE ALWAYS SURE YOU CAN FIX IT LATER.
IS HE HERE? C'MON, I JUST WANNA TALK TO HIM.
S'OKAY, ROBIN. I GOT IT.
WHAT DO YOU WANT, DAD?
LET'S JUST TAKE A WALK FOR A SEC.


DAD, I KNOW YOU'RE SCARED. I WOULD BE, TOO. BUT I DON'T NEED YOUR HELP.
THIS ISN'T ABOUT THAT. THIS IS ABOUT HOW I COULD USE *YOURS*.
WILL FOR FOOD
IS IT GETTING WORSE? ARE YOU... HOW LONG DO YOU--
NO, NO. THIS IS ABOUT HERO STUFF, BELIEVE IT OR NOT. I HAD SOMETHING GO SOUTH ON ME RECENTLY.
THE BAD GUY GOT AWAY. BUT I'VE MANAGED TO TRACK HIM DOWN. HE'S HIDING OUT AT THE MAMMOTH CITY DOCKS, BUT...
...BUT I'M NOT AT THE STRENGTH I WAS. I CAN'T PULL THIS OFF ON MY OWN AN' I...
DAD.
YOU NEED ME TO STEP IN FOR YOU?
NO, NO... BUT TWO PLASTIC MEN ARE BETTER THAN ONE.
IF YOU WERE WITH ME...WHAT DO YA SAY? ONE LAST CRIME-FIGHT WITH YOUR OL' MAN?


WHAT'D YOU SAY THIS GUY'S NAME WAS?
DR. NO-FACE.
LEMME GUESS. HE DOESN'T HAVE A FACE.
NOT FOR A WHILE, NO.
AND HE'S ANGRY ABOUT THAT.
SEEMS THAT WAY.
HEY, DAD.
YEAH, LUKE?
THIS IS NICE.
WHAT IS?
YOU AND ME. LIKE THIS.
YEAH. IT REALLY IS.

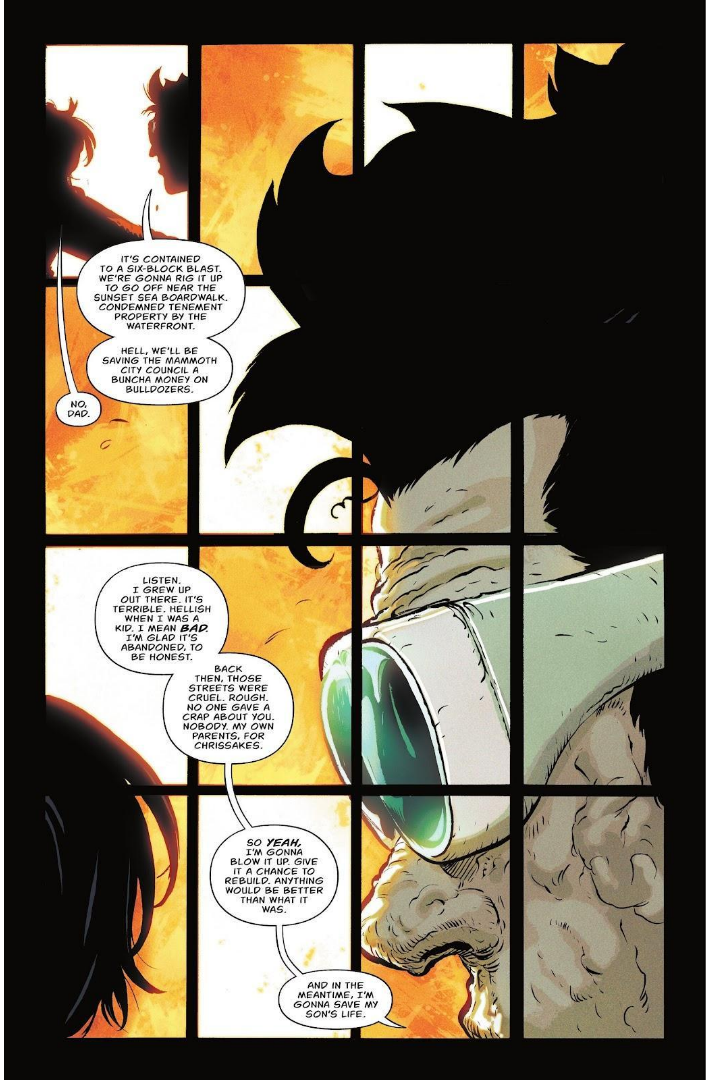

NO-FACE IS HERE?
LAST I HEARD.
ANY KIND OF PERIMETER DEFENSES? BOOBY TRAPS TO LOOK OUT FOR?
I WIPED OUT HIS ENTIRE APPARATUS LAST TIME. HE BARELY GOT AWAY HIMSELF.
HE'S RUNNIN' SCARED.
THEN LET'S MOVE--
WAIT A SECOND. LOOGIE.
DAD, PLEASE DON'T CALL ME THAT.
SORRY. LUKE.
I LOVE YOU, SON.
OKAY.


I LOVE YOU.
UH...
DAD?
HEY!
NOW, DOC, NOW!
WHO ARE YOU?
SHOULD WORK IN SECONDS...
WHAT THE...WHY AM I SO ITCHY?
YOU SURE HE'S OKAY?
IT'S MOSTLY CORNSTARCH, WHICH ACTS AS A POLYMER PARALYTIC. DEPRIVES THE CELLS OF ELASTICITY, BUT IT'LL ONLY GIVE US A DAY AT BEST. WE NEED TO MOVE FAST.


WHAT JUST HAPPENED? WHAT'D YOU DO TO ME? DAD, ARE THESE PEOPLE WITH YOU?
GEE, LOOG, DON'T YA REMEMBER YER UNCLE WOOZY?
CALM DOWN, LUKE. WE'RE GONNA HELP YOU.
AND I TOLD YOU I DON'T NEED YOUR HELP--
EASY NOW.
THAT'S THE GUY WITH NO FACE, ISN'T IT?
BUT I'M SCRATCHING MY HEAD HERE, DAD...
...'CAUSE IT SEEMS LIKE HE'S WORKING FOR YOU.

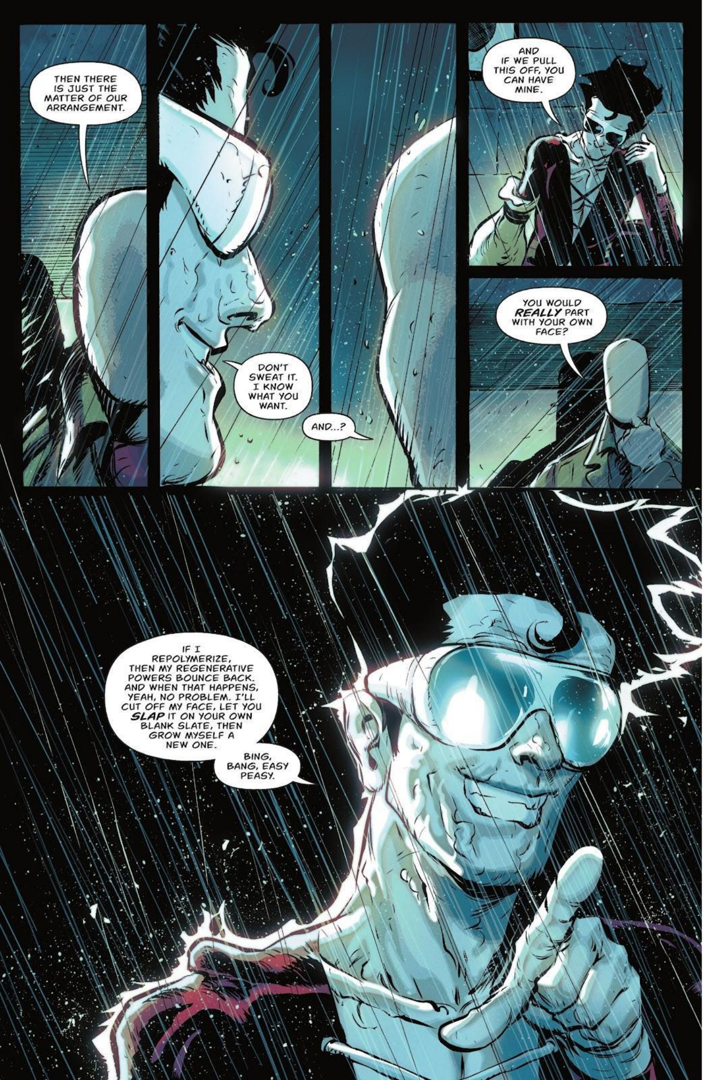

LUKE. I KNOW YOU'RE ANGRY.
ANGRY DOESN'T EVEN BEGIN TO COVER IT.
LOOK AT ME, SON. I'M COMING APART HERE. THE EXACT SAME THING COULD HAPPEN TO YOU.
IT'S ALMOST CERTAINLY HEREDITARY.
IS THAT EVEN TRUE? OR ARE YOU JUST LYING SOME MORE?


THEN RUN A TEST ON ME! I DON'T CARE. AND IF I DON'T HAVE IT, YOU CAN LET ME GO AND PROCEED TO RUIN THE REST OF YOUR LIVES WITHOUT ME INVOLVED.
EVEN IF YOUR CELLS SHOW NO SIGNS OF CURRENT DEPOLYMERIZATION, THERE'S A HIGH PROBABILITY THAT THEY WILL DETERIORATE AT A LATER DATE.
THAT'S WHY THIS IS THE ONLY WAY, LUKE. WE PULL THIS OFF, WE MAKE SURE YOU'RE OKAY. FOREVER.
JESUS, DAD, YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT SETTING OFF A NUCLEAR BOMB!
THE STRENGTH OF THE FUSION REACTION WILL SOLIDIFY AND STABILIZE THE BONDS IN YOUR MOLECULES AS WELL AS YOUR FATHER'S. THE UNZIPPING PROCESS CEASES AND REVERSES.
FORGET IT! NO WAY.
IF YOU KNEW YOU HAD CANCER, OR EVEN A HIGH PREDISPOSITION TO CANCER, YOU'RE TELLING ME YOU WOULDN'T SEEK TO UNDO THAT? CURE YOURSELF OF A TERMINAL DISEASE?
I MEAN, YOU MIGHT REPAIR THE MOLECULAR DAMAGE, SURE, BUT HOW DO YOU FIX THE DECADES OF PARENTAL NEGLECT AND FAILURE?


IT'S CONTAINED TO A SIX-BLOCK BLAST. WE'RE GONNA RIG IT UP TO GO OFF NEAR THE SUNSET SEA BOARDWALK. CONDEMNED TENEMENT PROPERTY BY THE WATERFRONT.
HELL, WE'LL BE SAVING THE MAMMOTH CITY COUNCIL A BUNCHA MONEY ON BULLDOZERS.
NO, DAD.
LISTEN. I GREW UP OUT THERE. IT'S TERRIBLE. HELLISH WHEN I WAS A KID. I MEAN **BAD.** I'M GLAD IT'S ABANDONED, TO BE HONEST.
BACK THEN, THOSE STREETS WERE CRUEL. ROUGH. NO ONE GAVE A CRAP ABOUT YOU. NOBODY. MY OWN PARENTS, FOR CHRISSAKES.
SO ***YEAH,*** I'M GONNA BLOW IT UP. GIVE IT A CHANCE TO REBUILD. ANYTHING WOULD BE BETTER THAN WHAT IT WAS.
AND IN THE MEANTIME, I'M GONNA SAVE MY SON'S LIFE.

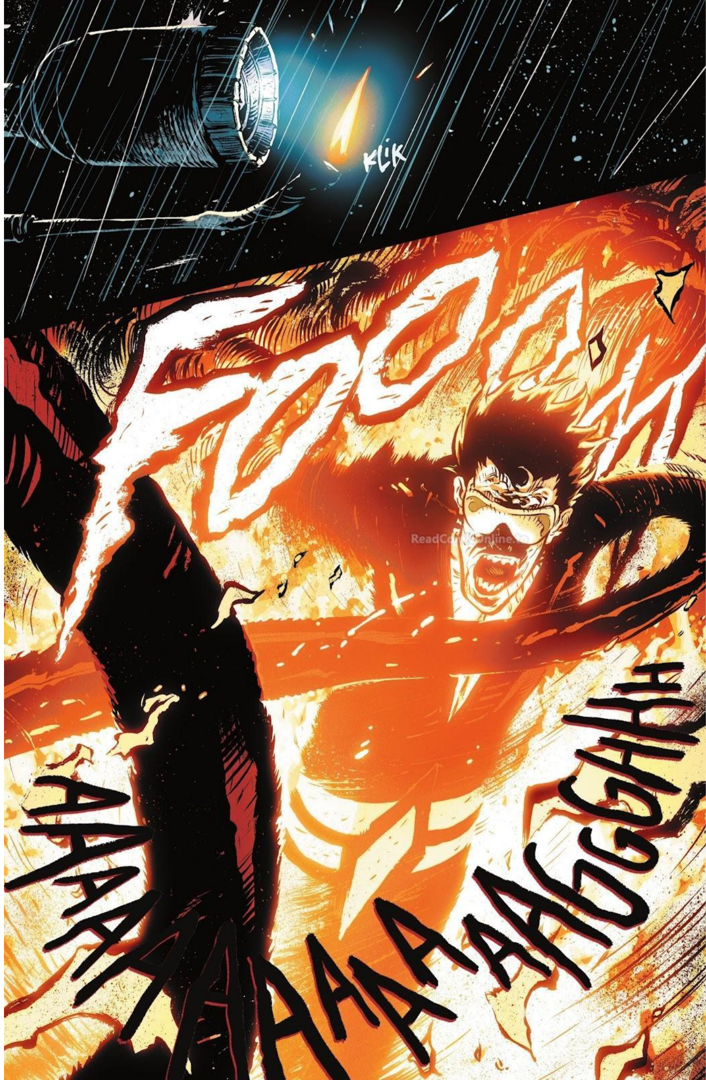

IF THERE WERE ANY OTHER WAY TO DO THIS, I WOULD.
THIS IS HOW YOU DON'T END UP LIKE ME, LUKE.
I DID YOU SO WRONG YOUR WHOLE LIFE.
LET ME DO RIGHT BY YOU FOR ONCE.
PLEASE.
TRUST ME.


LATER.
HE SEEMS LIKE A GOOD KID.
HE IS. THAT'S WHAT MAKES HIM DIFFERENT FROM ME.
YOU'RE BEING TOO HARD ON YOURSELF.
TELL THAT TO THE METAL MEN.
O'BRIAN. A WORD.
THE BOMB CASING, TRIGGER MECHANISM, SCAFFOLDING, AND OTHER MISCELLANEA, SHOULD BE ASSEMBLED WITHIN A FEW HOURS.
BUT URANIUM NEEDS TO BE PULVERIZED AND MIXED WITH DR. MENLO'S AND MY GROUND-WATER SOLUTION. DO YOU APPROVE?
AS LONG AS THERE'S ENOUGH LEFT TO REGENERATE HIM, I THINK THE GUY COULD USE A LITTLE PULVERIZING.


THEN THERE IS JUST THE MATTER OF OUR ARRANGEMENT.
DON'T SWEAT IT. I KNOW WHAT YOU WANT.
AND...?
AND IF WE PULL THIS OFF, YOU CAN HAVE MINE.
YOU WOULD REALLY PART WITH YOUR OWN FACE?
IF I REPOLYMERIZE, THEN MY REGENERATIVE POWERS BOUNCE BACK. AND WHEN THAT HAPPENS, YEAH, NO PROBLEM. I'LL CUT OFF MY FACE, LET YOU SLAP IT ON YOUR OWN BLANK SLATE, THEN GROW MYSELF A NEW ONE.
BING, BANG, EASY PEASY.


WELL, I REALLY APPRECIATE THAT--
HOLD ON A SECOND, DOC.
WHO'S THERE?
SKRCH!
HELLO, PATRICK.
YOU'RE GETTING WORSE.
NO, MAN, I TOLD YOU, I GOT A TREATMENT IN PLACE. I SHOULD BE BACK AT IT AGAIN AT KRISPY KREME IN NO TIME.
THAT'S NOT WHAT I MEANT.


THEN I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT.
ALL I WANT TO HEAR IS THE TRUTH.
TELL ME WHAT HAPPENED TO THE METAL MEN.
I ALREADY TOLD YA, PAL, THEY FELL FROM THE--
I FOUND A *LARGE MAGNET* ON THE REFINERY ROOF. I RAN THE PRINTS ON IT. THE PRINTS BELONGED TO SOMEONE WITH A *CRIMINAL RECORD*. FELLOW BY THE NAME OF WOOZY WINKS.
A KNOWN CRIMINAL ASSOCIATE OF YOURS FROM THE PAST.
FURTHERMORE, THE SUPPORT BOLTS OF THE CATWALK WEREN'T STRIPPED. THEY WERE INSTALLED LESS THAN *A YEAR AGO,* IN FACT. THE DRILL HOLES IN THE CEMENT WALLS WERE LIKEWISE *ALSO* NEW.
BUT THE BOLTS STILL BROKE AWAY... PUZZLING...

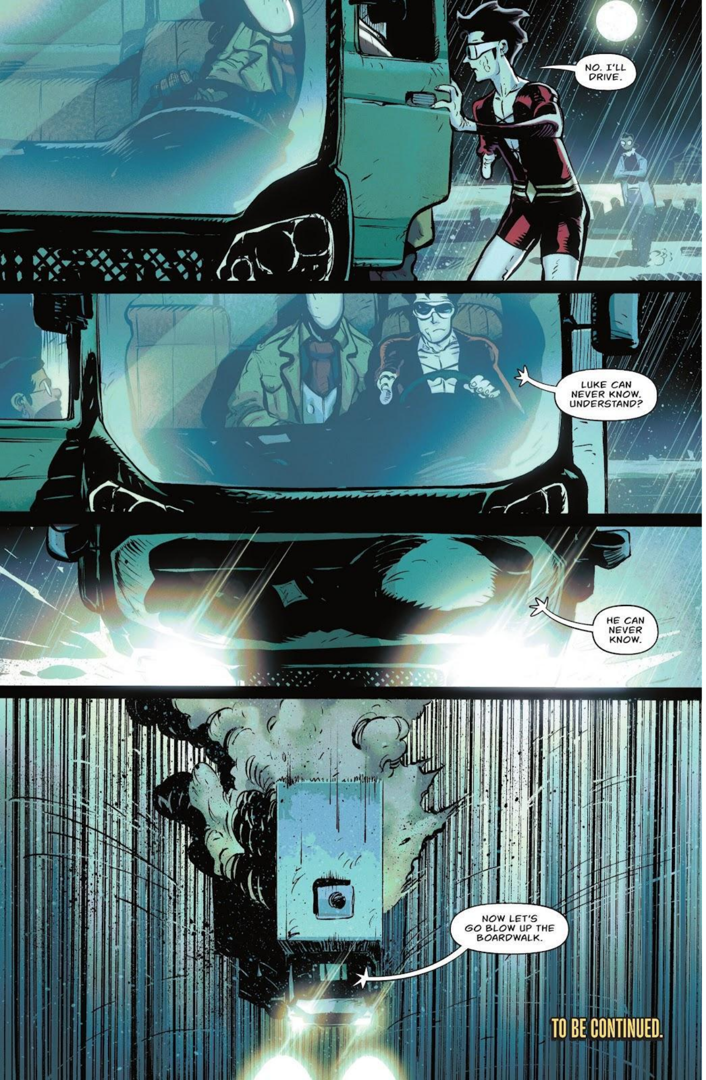

KLIK


AAAAAUUUGGGHHHNNNN
KAFF KAFF
KAFFF KAFFFFF
HNNNNNN HNNNNNNNN--
SSSSSSSSSHHHHHHHH
WHY... WHY...?


HE WOULD'VE GONE TO THE LEAGUE.
YOU WOULDN'T HAVE BEEN ABLE TO SAVE LUKE.
HE'S DEAD...
WE...WE... WE...IGNITED...YOUR OUTER DERMAL POLYMER LAYER. IT INCREASED THE SUBLIMATION OF ETHYLENE GAS YOU WERE ALREADY EMITTING...
...BY A FACTOR OF THOUSANDS.
YOU KILLED HIM...YOU POISONED HIM...
PATRICK.
IF YOU WANT TO SAVE YOUR SON, WE HAVE TO DO IT NOW.
WHERE IS HE? WHERE'S LUKE...


SEE? CANASTA.
OH, WOW.
I'LL ADMIT, I DIDN'T SEE THAT COMING.


VERA, GET A TARP OUT OF THE BACK OF THE TRUCK.
I CAN'T... I CAN'T...
NOW TUCK IT UNDERNEATH. WE'LL SEE IF WE CAN GET HIM INTO THE RIVER.
SPLAASH!
GET IN. IT'S TIME.
I'LL BRING DOWN THE OTHERS FROM THE APARTMENT. WE'VE GOT TO GO NOW IF WE HAVE ANY CHANCE.


NO. I'LL DRIVE.
LUKE CAN NEVER KNOW. UNDERSTAND?
HE CAN NEVER KNOW.
NOW LET'S GO BLOW UP THE BOARDWALK.
TO BE CONTINUED.

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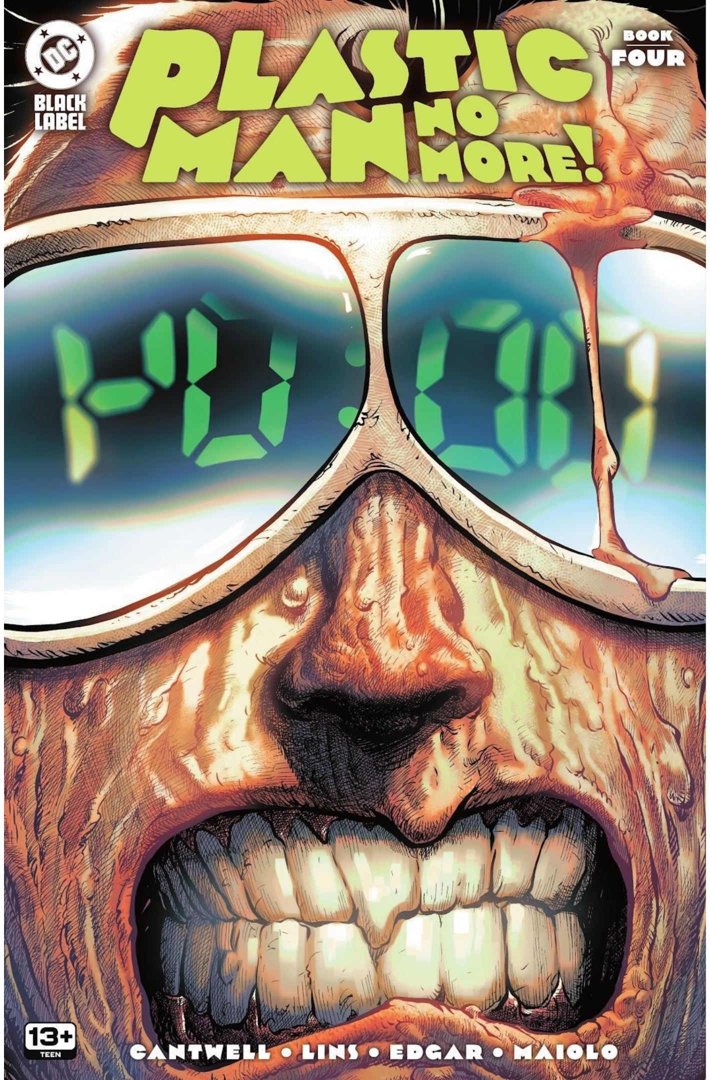
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"THIS IS HOW YOU DON'T END UP LIKE ME, LUKE."



Eel O'Brian might be a superhero now—but before he was anything else, he was a crook. Until the accident that turned him into the pliable Plastic Man, Eel was bad to the bone...and just because he no longer has bones doesn't mean that's not still true. When an incident on a Justice League mission leads to catastrophic cellular damage, Plastic Man discovers he just might be out of time to make amends for the past he's tried hard to outrun—or to save the soul of his son, who (unfortunately for him) might have inherited more from dear old Dad than just his superpowers...

The Eisner Award-nominated creative team of Christopher Cantwell (*Briar, Doctor Doom, Halt and Catch Fire*) and Alex Lins (*Monarch*) brings you the five words you thought you'd never read: body-horror Plastic Man noir!



DC
BLACK LABEL
PLASTIC MAN NO MORE!
BOOK FOUR
10:00
13+ TEEN
CANTWELL • LINS • EDGAR • MAIOLO

PLASTIC MAN NO MORE!

BOOK FOUR

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VARIANT COVER

SUPERMAN CREATED BY **JERRY SIEGEL** AND **JOE SHUSTER**
BY SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT WITH **THE JERRY SIEGEL FAMILY**

DC BLACK LABEL



SUNSET SEA, MAMMOTH CITY.
NOT A SOUL FOR MILES.
MY OL' MAN TOOK ME HERE BACK IN THE DAY.
LEFT ME AT A SLOT MACHINE. GOT PISS DRUNK AND LOST A THOUSAND DOLLARS OF OUR RENT MONEY AT THE BLACKJACK TABLE.



MY OL' MAN TOOK ME HERE, TOO.
HE KIDNAPPED ME. TIED ME TO THIS PIER. FORCED ME INTO THE EPICENTER OF A NUCLEAR BLAST.
LUKE, I'M DOING THIS TO SAVE YOUR LIFE. WHO KNOWS, MAYBE I'LL GET A SECOND CHANCE ON TOP OF IT.
YOU'VE BLOWN EVERY SECOND CHANCE YOU'VE BEEN HANDED.
CENTRIFUGE IS IN PLACE. PAYLOAD. REMOTE TRIGGER CONTROL AS WELL.
HOLDING CAGE SHOULD PROTECT YOU BOTH FROM THE CONCUSSIVE FORCE BUT ALLOW ENOUGH OF THE FUSION REACTION TO PENETRATE YOUR CELLS.
THE DEPOLYMERIZATION YOU'RE EXPERIENCING SHOULD CEASE, THEN HOPEFULLY REVERSE. THIS SHOULD ALSO PREVENT IT FROM EVER OCCURRING IN LUKE'S BODY.
OR IT'LL KILL YOU BOTH.

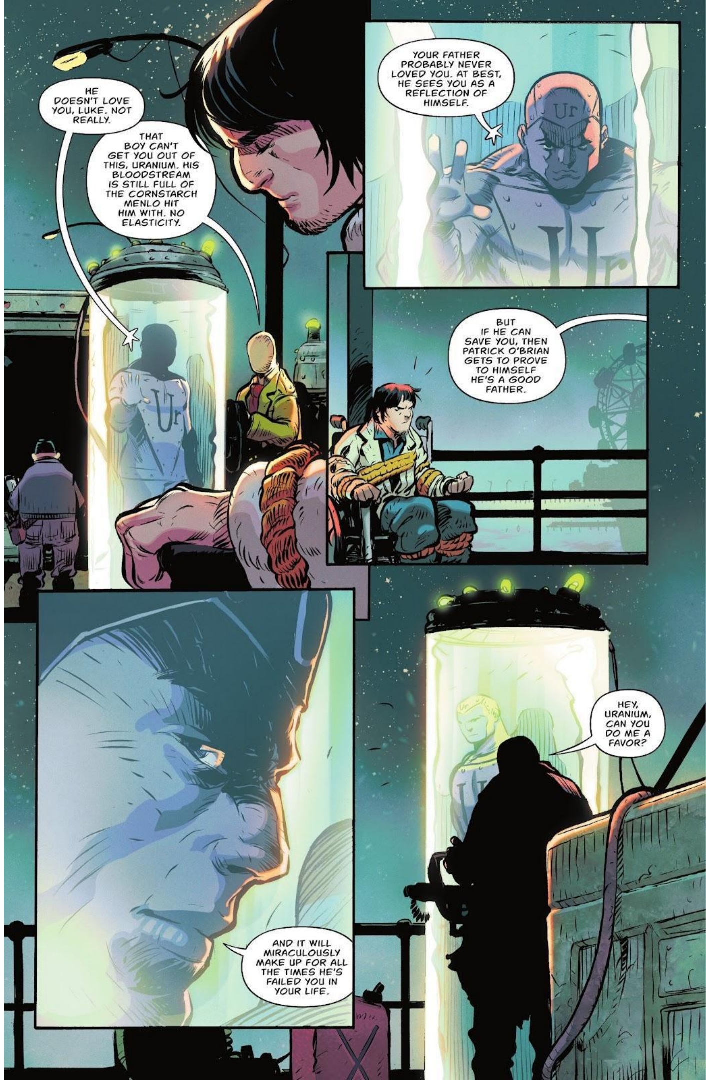

DAD, PLEASE STOP THIS. IT'S INSANE--
NOT WHEN WE'RE THIS CLOSE. ALL I'VE HAD TO DO TO GET HERE...I'M TELLIN' YOU, LUKE, IT'LL BE FINE--
AH GEEZ--
HOLD ON, EEL, HOLD ON!
HEY, NO-FACE! WE GOT DUCT TAPE OR SOMETHIN'?

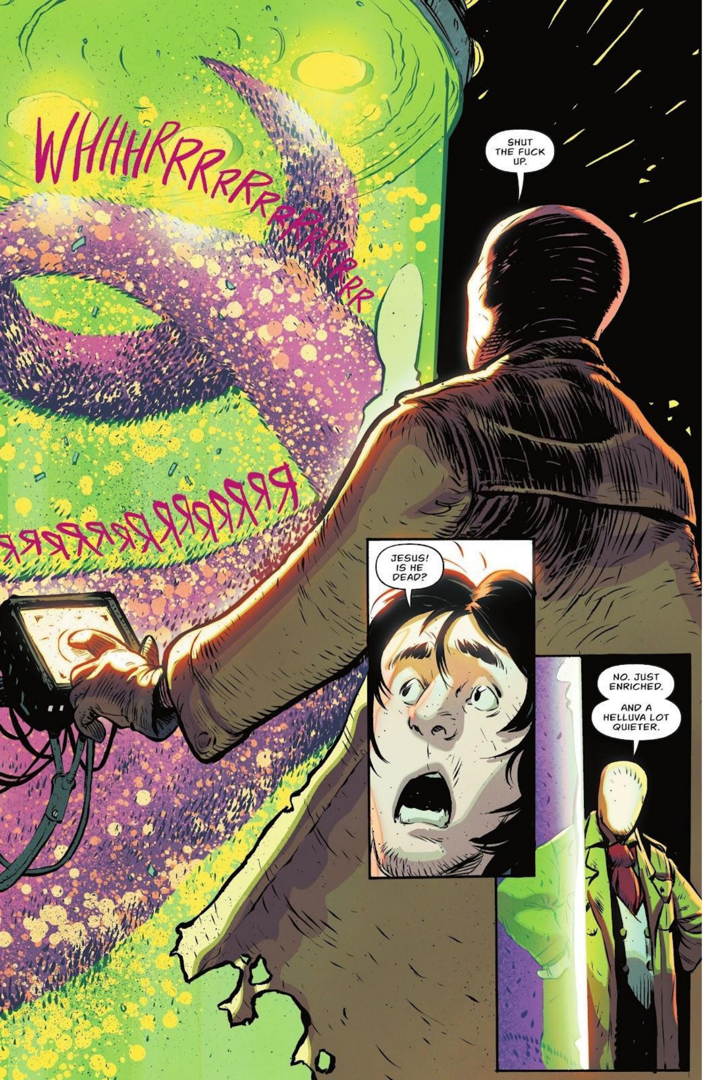

EVERYTHING IS GOING TO BE JUST FINE.


YOU PROMISED ME A FACE.
AND YOU'LL GET IT, MAGAN.
BUT I DON'T WANT *THAT* FACE. LOOK AT IT! IT'S MELTED. IT'S RUINED.
JUST FIX MY GODDAMN MOLECULES AND YOU'LL GET A NICE NEW ONE, OKAY?
WHAT IF THIS DOESN'T FIX ANYTHING?
Ur
IT PROBABLY WON'T.
HOW AM I THE ONLY ONE TRYIN' TO LOOK ON THE BRIGHT SIDE WHEN I'M THE GUY WITH HIS HEAD IN A BAG?!
IT'S ACTUALLY A CANISTER.


JUST... GIMME A MINUTE.
I SAID I NEED A MINUTE, DOC.
THE ACCIDENT A FEW YEARS AGO. THE ONE THAT INVOLVED MY DAUGHTER.
WE'D ALL GOTTEN TOGETHER TO CELEBRATE A RESEARCH GRANT WE'D WON. MY HUSBAND WAS OUT OF TOWN BUT THE PARTY HAD CHILDCARE. HOW THOUGHTFUL.
I DON'T KNOW HOW MUCH I HAD TO DRINK. NOT A LOT. THEY NEVER TESTED ME AT THE ACCIDENT SCENE.
VERA...
WHEN MY HUSBAND SAID WE SHOULD TAKE HER OFF LIFE SUPPORT, I SAID NO.


I SCREAMED AT HIM. I THINK I THREW SOMETHING.
I HAD TO BE REMOVED FROM THE HOSPITAL.
WHEN SHE PASSED, I NEVER FORGAVE HIM.
EVEN THOUGH IT WAS MY FAULT. ALL OF IT.
WE'VE BEEN DIVORCED LONGER THAN WE WERE MARRIED.
YOU KNOW, SOMETIMES I STILL THINK I CAN HEAR HER SINGING IN THE BEDROOM.
DON'T LOSE YOUR SON.
...I THINK I ALREADY DID.


HE DOESN'T LOVE YOU, LUKE. NOT REALLY.
THAT BOY CAN'T GET YOU OUT OF THIS, URANIUM. HIS BLOODSTREAM IS STILL FULL OF THE CORNSTARCH MENLO HIT HIM WITH. NO ELASTICITY.
YOUR FATHER PROBABLY NEVER LOVED YOU. AT BEST, HE SEES YOU AS A REFLECTION OF HIMSELF.
BUT IF HE CAN SAVE YOU, THEN PATRICK O'BRIAN GETS TO PROVE TO HIMSELF HE'S A GOOD FATHER.
AND IT WILL MIRACULOUSLY MAKE UP FOR ALL THE TIMES HE'S FAILED YOU IN YOUR LIFE.
HEY, URANIUM, CAN YOU DO ME A FAVOR?


WHHHRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRR
RRRRRRRRRRRRRRRR
SHUT THE FUCK UP.
JESUS! IS HE DEAD?
NO. JUST ENRICHED.
AND A HELLUVA LOT QUIETER.


C'MON, SON. IT'S TIME TO GET IN THAT CAGE.
NO!
OKAY. LISTEN TO ME.
I WALKED AWAY FROM YOU A LONG TIME AGO.
YOU DIDN'T HAVE A DAD. BUT I WANT YOU TO HAVE A LIFE.
YOUR LIFE GETS TO BE DIFFERENT.
AND IF WE PULL THIS OFF...
...MAYBE I CAN BE THE FATHER YOU HAVEN'T GOTTEN TO HAVE YET. IF IT'S NOT TOO LATE.
BUT IT'S UP TO YOU, LUKE. I WON'T FORCE YOU.


OKAY. SHOW'S OVER.
I'M NOT GOING TO LET YOU OR YOUR DAD BE TEST SUBJECTS IN A NUCLEAR EXPLOSION.
LUKE, ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?
DON'T GET IN THE MIDDLE OF THIS, KID--
I THINK IT'S TIME SOMEONE DID!
YOU KIDNAPPED A METAL MAN. AND CONVENIENTLY, ALL OF HIS SIBLINGS ARE DEAD, SOMETHING DETECTIVE CHIMP WAS LOOKING INTO...
...UNTIL HE DISAPPEARED AS WELL.

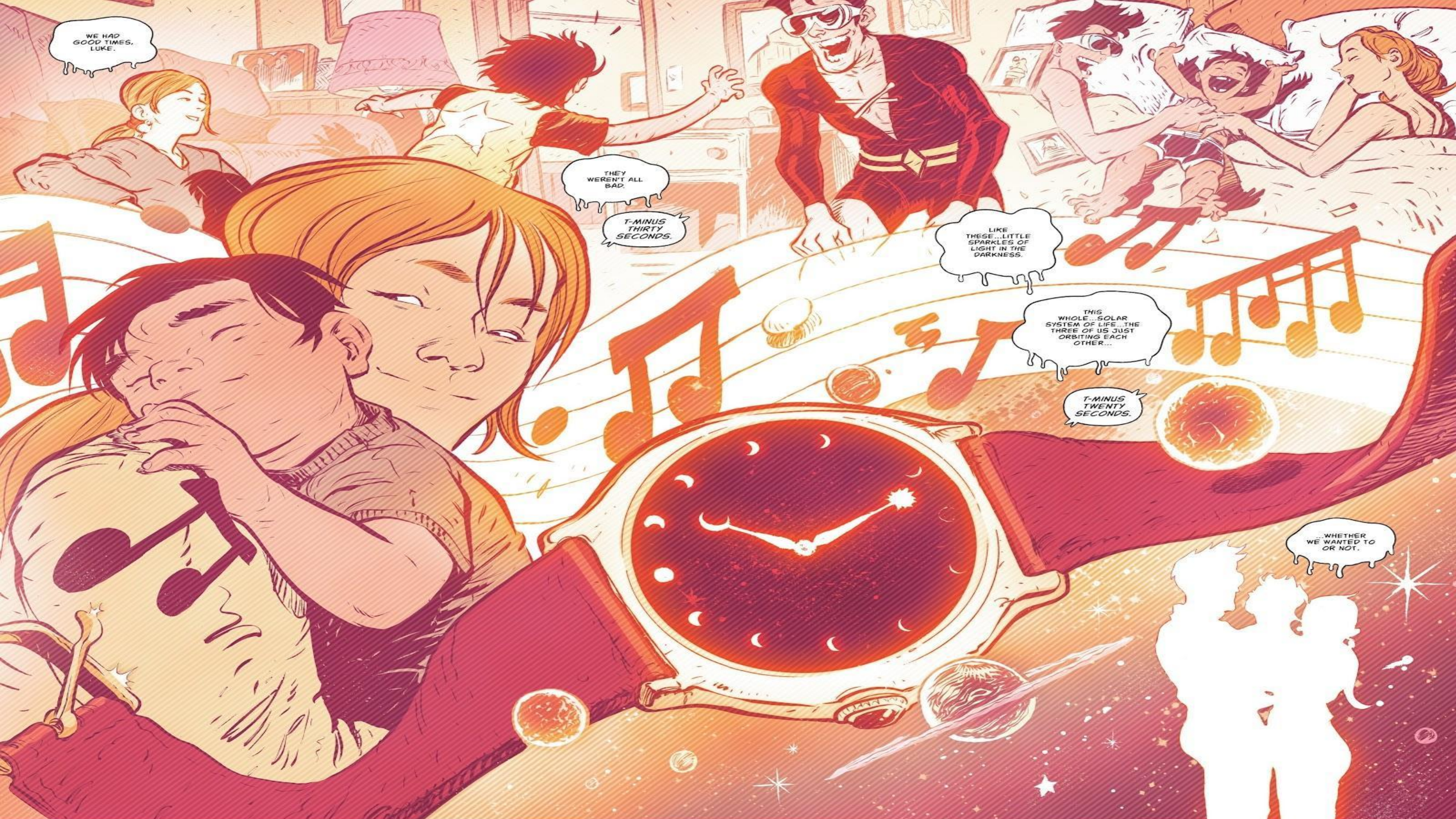

C'MON, LUKE. IT'S TIME TO WALK AWAY.
NO. WE'RE GONNA GO THROUGH WITH THIS.
WHAT? LUKE--
FWAK
I'M SORRY, ROBIN.
CORNSTARCH WORE OFF.
MY DAD'S A DEADBEAT.
SPLSSHH
BUT I'M NOT GONNA JUST WATCH HIM DIE.

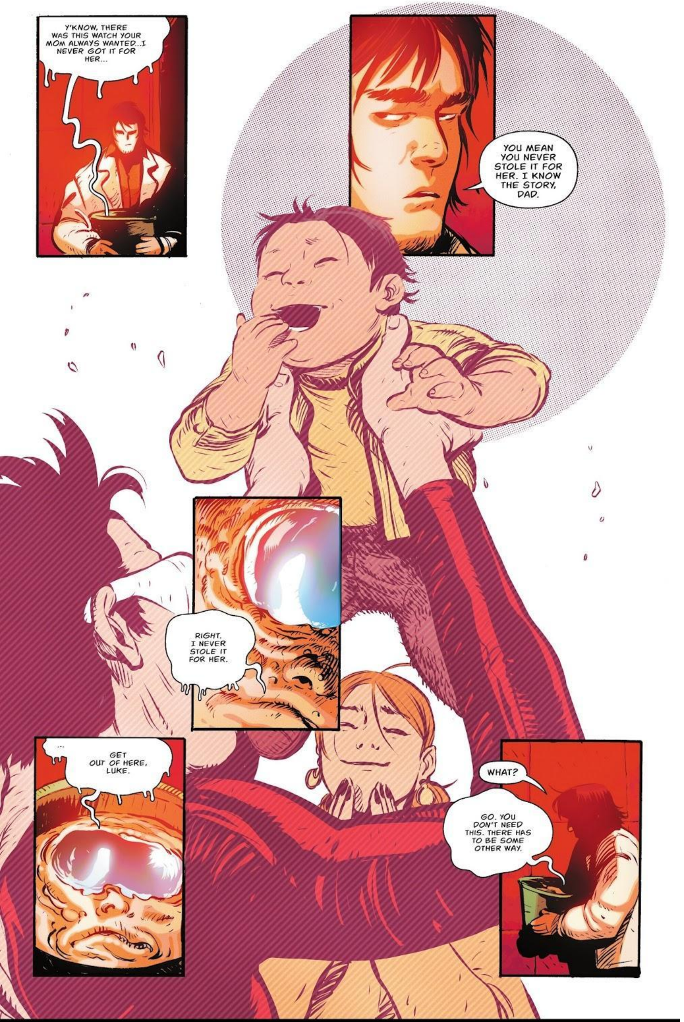

GO ON, KID. SCRAM. WE DON'T WANT TO HURT ANYBODY.
THAT'S FUNNY.
I'M HURT.
AND I DON'T THINK I'M THE ONLY ONE.
JUST LET US BE!
SNAP!


GOD...
WHAT A MESS...
DAD...
IT'S UP TO YOU, LUKE... IT'S UP TO YOU...
LUKE. C'MON. IT'S OVER.
NO.
HYYNNNGGGGGH!
EEL, OL' BUDDY, STAY WITH ME...
GET ROBIN CLEAR OF THE BLAST RADIUS.
WE DON'T HAVE MUCH TIME.


I'M REALLY LOSIN' IT, HUH...?
IT'S GONNA BE OKAY, DAD.
I JUS' WANNA SAY...I LOVE YOUSE BOTH... I REALLY DO...
I KNOW, WOOZ. NOW GET TO THE SAFE ZONE.
NO SUCH THING WITH YOU, EEL...
REMOTE TRIGGER CONTROL. 2.5 MILES WEST.
BEGIN COUNTDOWN.
WELL, I'M IN A BUCKET.
I JUST HOPE I DON'T KICK IT, RIGHT, LOOGIE?
PLEASE DON'T CALL ME THAT, DAD...
T-MINUS SIXTY SECONDS.


WAIT...
...YOU DID BRING ME HERE ONCE BEFORE.
I DID...?
T-MINUS FIFTY SECONDS.
OH, YEAH... I REMEMBER NOW...
T-MINUS FORTY SECONDS.
WE HAD A GOOD TIME.


WE HAD GOOD TIMES, LUKE.
THEY WEREN'T ALL BAD.
T-MINUS THIRTY SECONDS.
LIKE THESE...LITTLE SPARKLES OF LIGHT IN THE DARKNESS.
THIS WHOLE...SOLAR SYSTEM OF LIFE...THE THREE OF US JUST ORBITING EACH OTHER...
T-MINUS TWENTY SECONDS.
...WHETHER WE WANTED TO OR NOT.



Y'KNOW, THERE WAS THIS WATCH YOUR MOM ALWAYS WANTED...I NEVER GOT IT FOR HER...
YOU MEAN YOU NEVER STOLE IT FOR HER. I KNOW THE STORY, DAD.
RIGHT. I NEVER STOLE IT FOR HER.
...
GET OUT OF HERE, LUKE.
WHAT?
GO. YOU DON'T NEED THIS. THERE HAS TO BE SOME OTHER WAY.



IF I GOT YOU KILLED...I DON'T THINK I'D EVER FORGIVE MYSELF. EVEN IF I WAS DEAD, TOO. BESIDES...
TEN.
...TOO MANY HAVE DIED ALREADY.
NINE.
YOU DON'T NEED ME, LUKE. YOU DID ONCE UPON A TIME, BUT I WASN'T THERE.
EIGHT.
NOW YOU CAN SAVE YOURSELF.
SEVEN.
FROM ME.
SIX.
FIVE.


LUKE! WAIT!
IT'S OKAY, WOOZY.
IT'S OKAY.
EEL, HE'S THE WHOLE DAMN REASON WE DID THIS! WHY ARE YOU LETTIN' HIM GO?!
TWO.
BECAUSE I LOVE HIM.
THIS COULD STILL WORK.
IT MIGHT.


WE'LL TAKE A CUP...
"...OF KINDNESS YET...
"...FOR AULD LANG SYNE..."


...WHEREUPON I WAS ABLE TO FREE LUKE O'BRIAN AND GET HIM CLEAR JUST BEFORE THE DETONATION.
BARTHOLOMEW MAGAN--A.K.A. DR. NO-FACE--REMAINS AT LARGE.
IT'S BELIEVED HE WAS PLASTIC MAN'S SOLE ACCOMPLICE.
IS THAT HOW IT HAPPENED, LUKE?
YOU WERE THE UNWITTING CAPTIVE OF YOUR FATHER?
CASE FILE
I... YEAH. I GUESS.
WELL.
IT'S A SHAME.
YES, IT'S A REAL SHAME.


OUR CONDOLENCES ON YOUR LOSS, LUKE.
PLASTIC MAN WAS A FUNNY GUY. MISGUIDED, IT SEEMS. MAYBE MURDERED A FEW PEOPLE. BUT FUNNY, NONETHELESS.
LUKE, WE KNOW THIS IS ALL STILL QUITE RAW...BUT THERE'S NOW A VACANCY IN THE JUSTICE LEAGUE.
WE THOUGHT YOU MIGHT CONSIDER JOINING US. PERHAPS EVEN AS OUR NEW PLASTIC MAN.

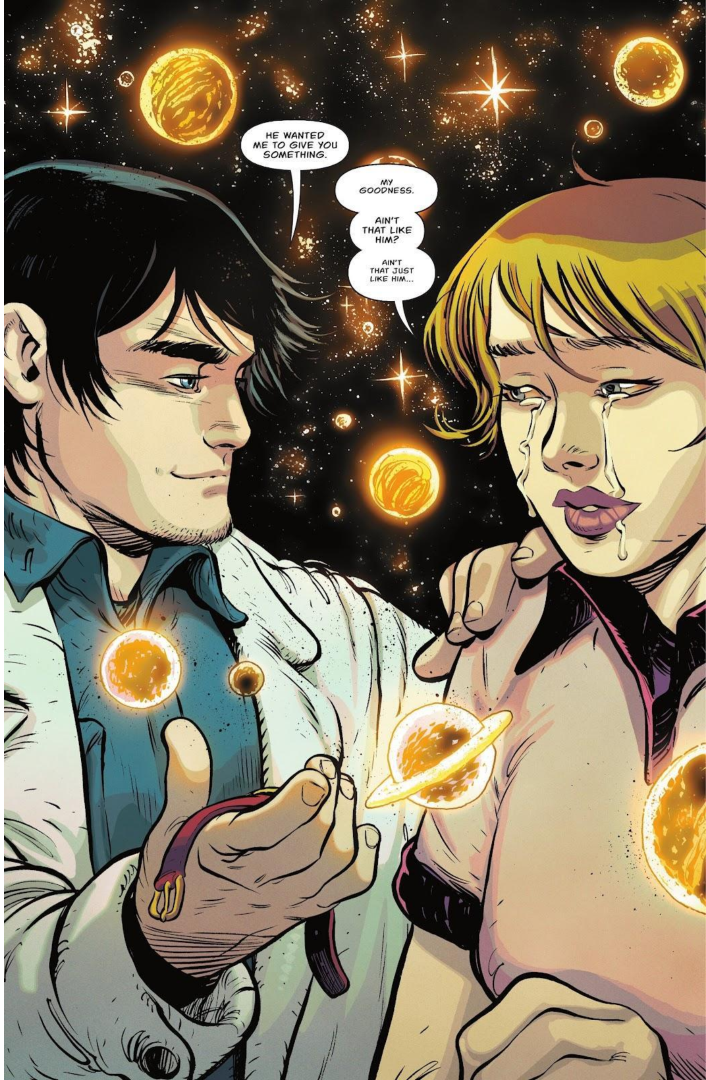

DOESN'T THAT NAME SEEM A LITTLE TAINTED NOW?
RIGHT, BUT I THINK BATMAN IS GETTING AT THE VERY REAL P.R. PROBLEM HERE.
YES. PERHAPS LUKE COULD HEAL THOSE WOUNDS BY TAKING UP HIS FATHER'S MANTLE.
SETTING RIGHT PATRICK O'BRIAN'S WRONGS.
...NO.
HE WAS A CRIMINAL. HE WAS A HERO. HE WAS A SCREW-UP.
AND HE WAS MY FATHER.
THAT'S HIS MANTLE. THAT'S MY LEGACY.
THANKS, BUT YOU CAN KEEP YOUR LEAGUE.


I THINK HE'S MAKING A MISTAKE.
YEAH. WELL. HONESTLY...
...I DON'T BLAME HIM.


NO SIGNS OF DEPOLYMERIZATION. NO CELLULAR DEGENERATION OF ANY KIND. FOR NOW. I WOULD SUGGEST YOU GET CHECKED REGULARLY.
OKAY. THANKS, DOC.
LUKE. ARE YOU GOING TO BE OKAY?
NO. YOU?
NO.


GEMS by Crabtree


LUKE?
HI, MOM.
DID YOU HEAR ABOUT DAD?
IT'S OKAY. WE DON'T HAVE TO TALK ABOUT IT.


HE WANTED ME TO GIVE YOU SOMETHING.
MY GOODNESS.
AIN'T THAT LIKE HIM?
AIN'T THAT JUST LIKE HIM...


YOU'RE THE BEST THING HE AND I EVER DID.
"JUST THAT ALONE...
"...THAT MAKES HIM A HERO."
THE END?



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"AIN'T THAT *JUST* LIKE HIM?"



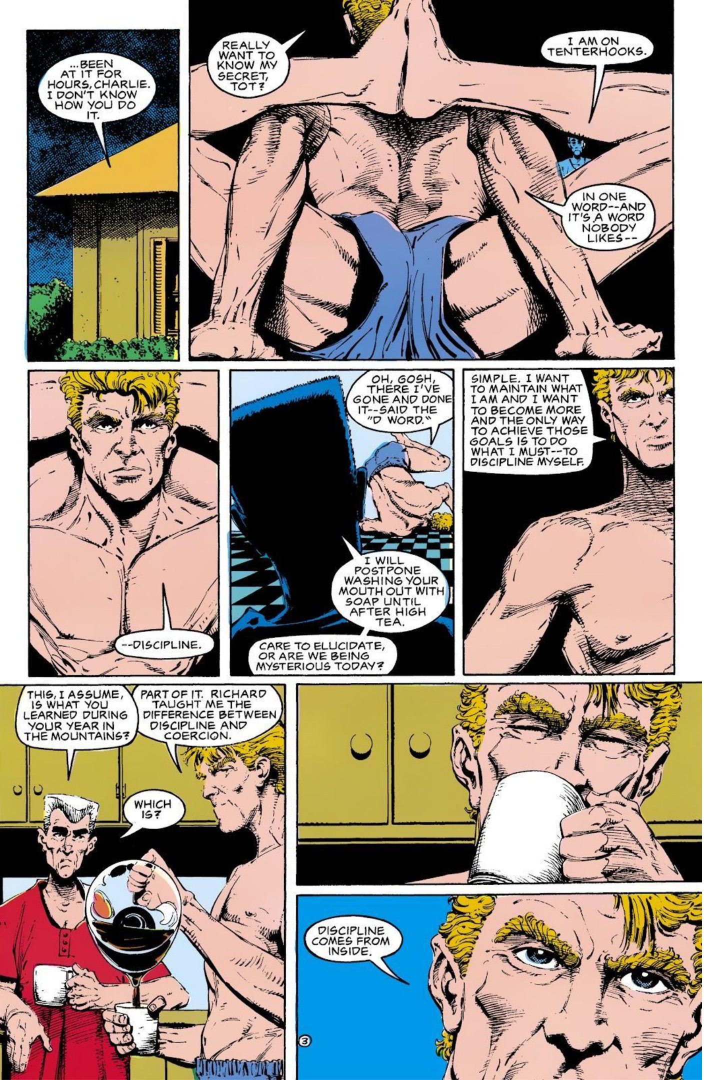
Eel O'Brian might be a superhero now—but before he was anything else, he was a crook. Until the accident that turned him into the pliable Plastic Man, Eel was bad to the bone...and just because he no longer has bones doesn't mean that's not still true. When an incident on a Justice League mission leads to catastrophic cellular damage, Plastic Man discovers he just might be out of time to make amends for the past he's tried hard to outrun—or to save the soul of his son, who (unfortunately for him) might have inherited more from dear old Dad than just his superpowers...

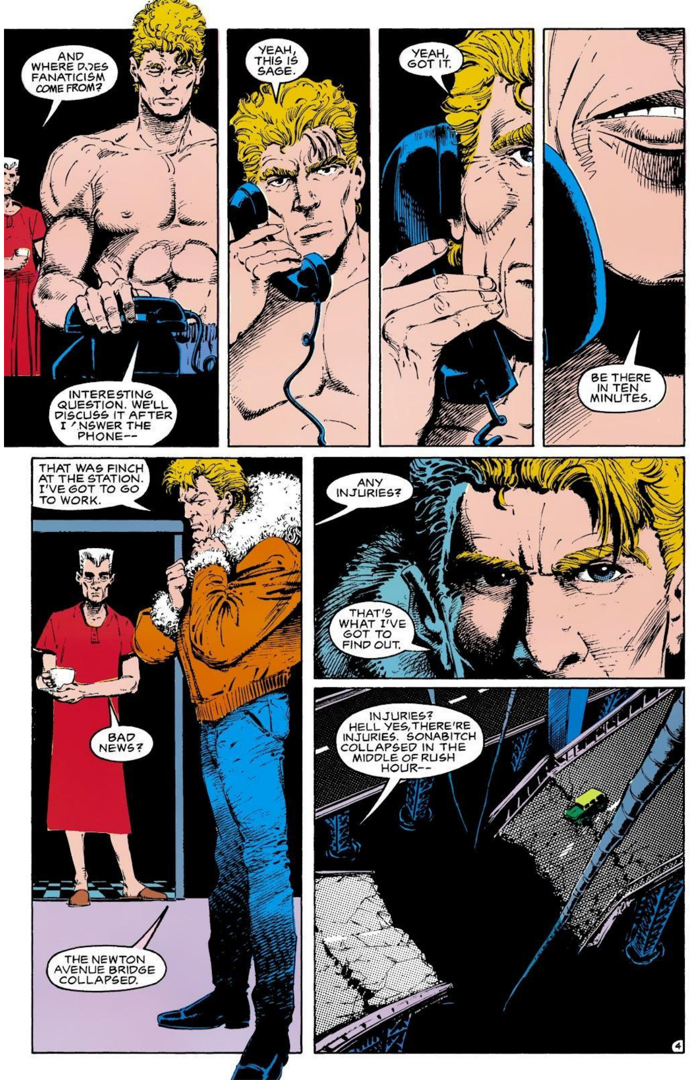
The Eisner Award-nominated creative team of Christopher Cantwell (*Briar, Doctor Doom, Halt and Catch Fire*) and Alex Lins (*Monarch*) brings you the five words you thought you'd never read: body-horror Plastic Man noir!

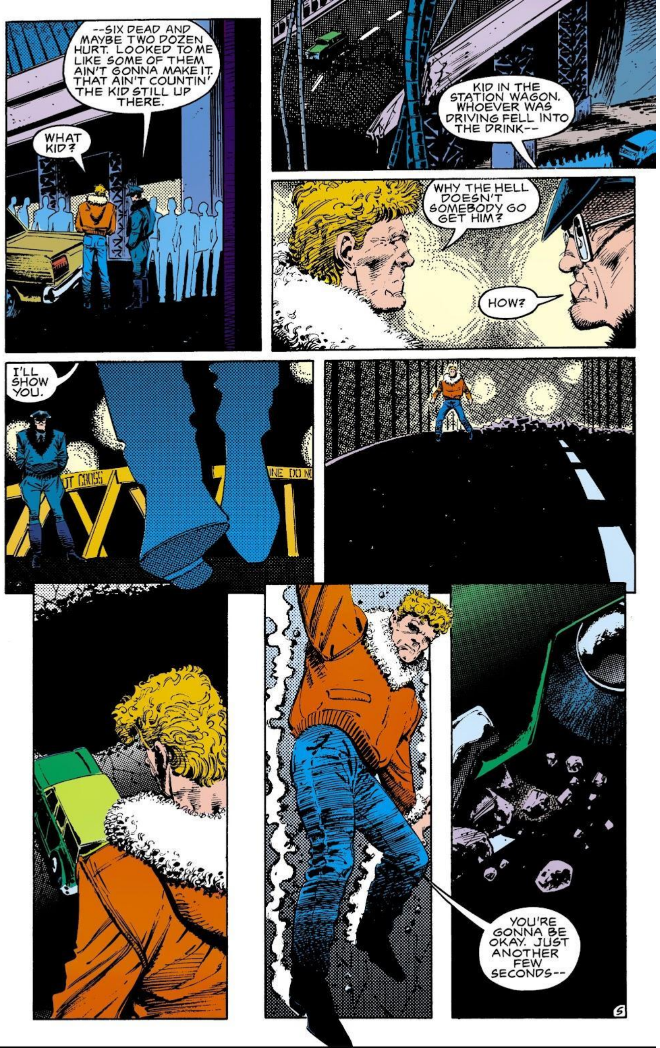

DC
No. 13
FEB. 1988
SUGGESTED FOR MATURE READERS
The QUESTION
O'NEIL · COWAN · MAGYAR
COWAN + SIENKIEWICZ


BE ALL THAT YOU CAN BE...
C'MON IN, SON. BEN LOOMIS IS MY NAME. MASTER SERGEANT BEN LOOMIS. SIDDOWN, LEMME TELL YOU ABOUT THE YEW NITED STATES ARMY.
PAY AND BENEFITS, SON. THAT'S WHAT IT'S ALL ABOUT.
DENNIS O'NEIL STORY
DENYS COWAN & RICK MAGYAR ART
STEVE HAYNIE LETTERING
TATJANA WOOD COLORING
MIKE GOLD EDITING

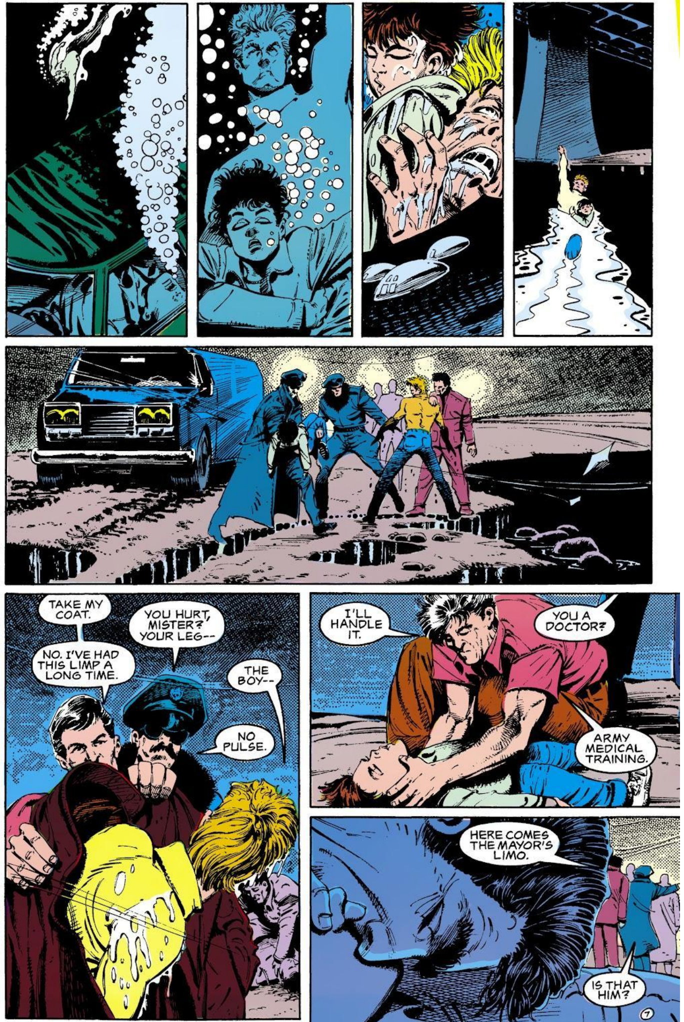

PAY AND BENEFITS, SON. BE ALL THAT YOU CAN BE.
I ALREADY AM.
HRUK
U.S. ARMY
BUT YOU'RE NOT. WEREN'T.
2


...BEEN AT IT FOR HOURS, CHARLIE. I DON'T KNOW HOW YOU DO IT.
REALLY WANT TO KNOW MY SECRET, TOT?
I AM ON TENTERHOOKS.
IN ONE WORD--AND IT'S A WORD NOBODY LIKES--
--DISCIPLINE.
OH, GOSH, THERE I'VE GONE AND DONE IT--SAID THE "D WORD."
I WILL POSTPONE WASHING YOUR MOUTH OUT WITH SOAP UNTIL AFTER HIGH TEA.
CARE TO ELUCIDATE, OR ARE WE BEING MYSTERIOUS TODAY?
SIMPLE. I WANT TO MAINTAIN WHAT I AM AND I WANT TO BECOME MORE AND THE ONLY WAY TO ACHIEVE THOSE GOALS IS TO DO WHAT I MUST--TO DISCIPLINE MYSELF.
THIS, I ASSUME, IS WHAT YOU LEARNED DURING YOUR YEAR IN THE MOUNTAINS?
PART OF IT. RICHARD TAUGHT ME THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN DISCIPLINE AND COERCION.
WHICH IS?
DISCIPLINE COMES FROM INSIDE.
3


AND WHERE DOES FANATICISM COME FROM?
INTERESTING QUESTION. WE'LL DISCUSS IT AFTER I ANSWER THE PHONE--
YEAH, THIS IS SAGE.
YEAH, GOT IT.
BE THERE IN TEN MINUTES.
THAT WAS FINCH AT THE STATION. I'VE GOT TO GO TO WORK.
BAD NEWS?
THE NEWTON AVENUE BRIDGE COLLAPSED.
ANY INJURIES?
THAT'S WHAT I'VE GOT TO FIND OUT.
INJURIES? HELL YES, THERE'RE INJURIES. SONABITCH COLLAPSED IN THE MIDDLE OF RUSH HOUR--
4


--SIX DEAD AND MAYBE TWO DOZEN HURT. LOOKED TO ME LIKE SOME OF THEM AIN'T GONNA MAKE IT. THAT AIN'T COUNTIN' THE KID STILL UP THERE.
WHAT KID?
KID IN THE STATION WAGON. WHOEVER WAS DRIVING FELL INTO THE DRINK--
WHY THE HELL DOESN'T SOMEBODY GO GET HIM?
HOW?
I'LL SHOW YOU.
YOU'RE GONNA BE OKAY. JUST ANOTHER FEW SECONDS--
5

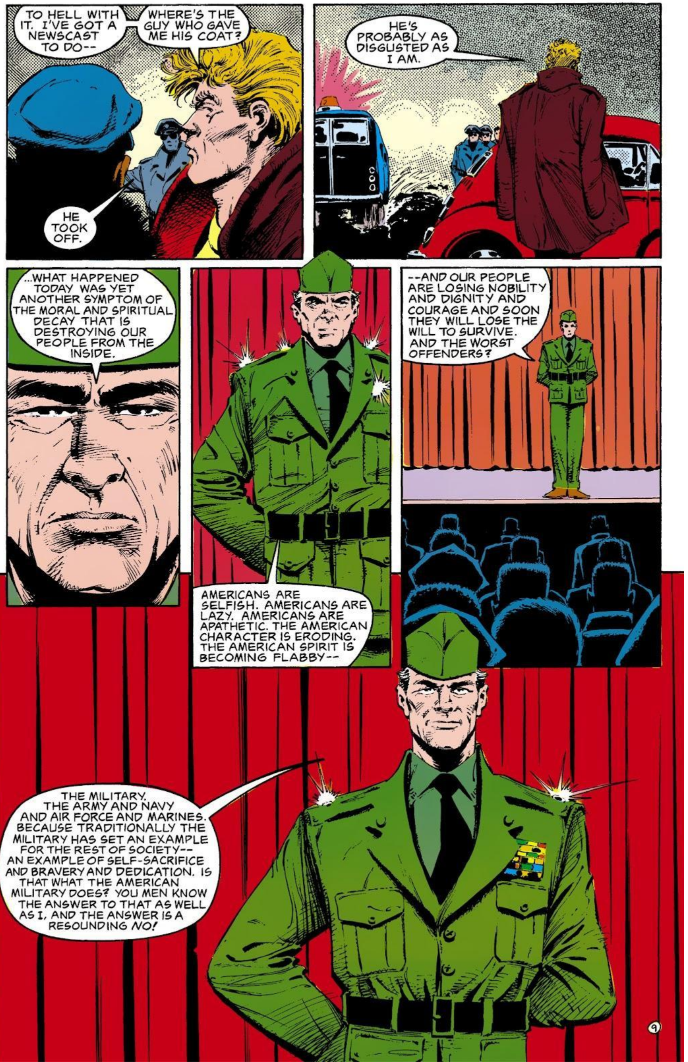

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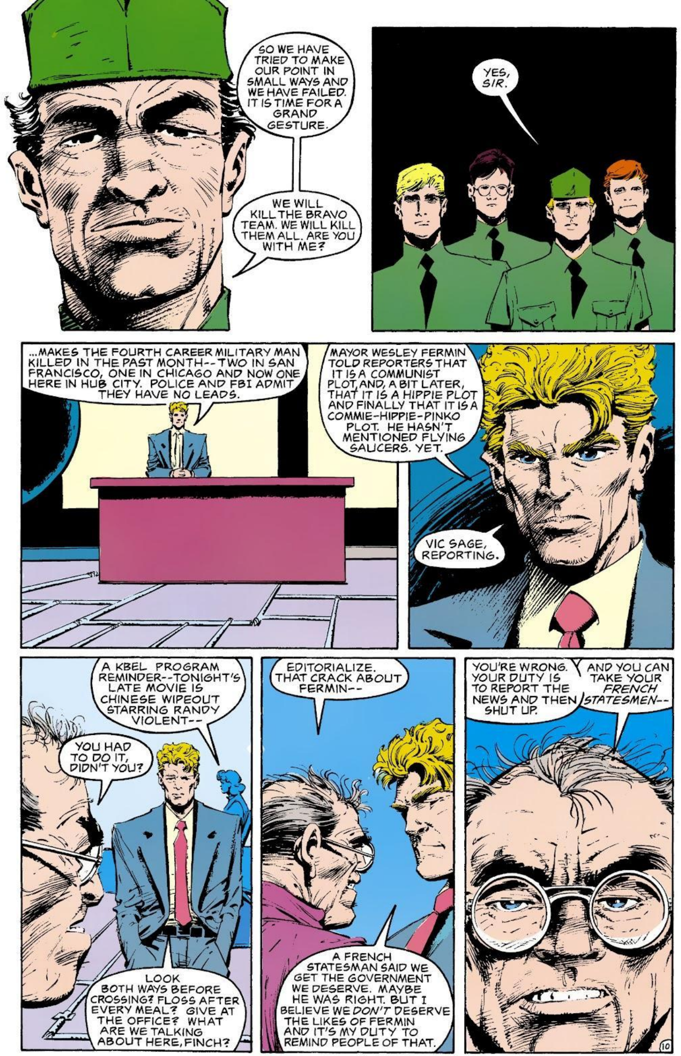
TAKE MY COAT.
YOU HURT, MISTER? YOUR LEG--
NO. I'VE HAD THIS LIMP A LONG TIME.
THE BOY--
NO PULSE.
I'LL HANDLE IT.
YOU A DOCTOR?
ARMY MEDICAL TRAINING.
HERE COMES THE MAYOR'S LIMO.
IS THAT HIM?
7



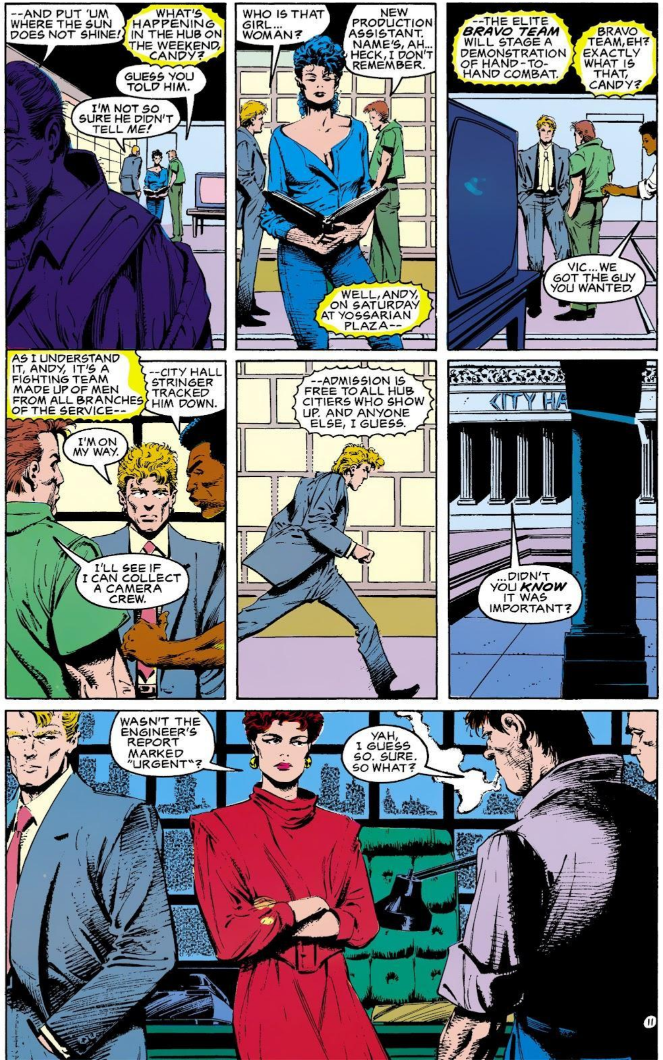
NO, HIS WIFE. MYRA.
WILL THE MAYOR BE COMING, MRS. FERMIN?
NO, WESLEY IS... INDISPOSED.
MRS. FERMIN, THIS IS LOUIS HADLEY, THE CITY ENGINEER--
I TOLD THEM--
--FILED A WRITTEN REPORT A MONTH AGO... SAID THE DAMN BRIDGE WAS ABOUT TO GO. DAMN FOUNDATION WAS SHOT TO HELL. IT WAS ALL IN MY REPORT--
FIND OUT WHY THAT REPORT WASN'T ACTED ON!
AS SOON AS WE GET BACK TO--
NOW!
VIC! WHAT HAPPENED TO YOU?
I FISHED THAT KID OUT OF THE RIVER.
HOW IS HE?
DAMN.
DEAD.
YOU GAVE IT YOUR BEST SHOT--
WHILE ABOUT A HUNDRED OF YOU SAT ON YOUR THUMBS! IF SOMEBODY'D TRIED FOR THE KID SOONER...
8



TO HELL WITH IT. I'VE GOT A NEWSCAST TO DO--
WHERE'S THE GUY WHO GAVE ME HIS COAT?
HE TOOK OFF.
HE'S PROBABLY AS DISGUSTED AS I AM.
...WHAT HAPPENED TODAY WAS YET ANOTHER SYMPTOM OF THE MORAL AND SPIRITUAL DECAY THAT IS DESTROYING OUR PEOPLE FROM THE INSIDE.
AMERICANS ARE SELFISH. AMERICANS ARE LAZY. AMERICANS ARE APATHETIC. THE AMERICAN CHARACTER IS ERODING. THE AMERICAN SPIRIT IS BECOMING FLABBY--
--AND OUR PEOPLE ARE LOSING NOBILITY AND DIGNITY AND COURAGE AND SOON THEY WILL LOSE THE WILL TO SURVIVE. AND THE WORST OFFENDERS?
THE MILITARY. THE ARMY AND NAVY AND AIR FORCE AND MARINES. BECAUSE TRADITIONALLY THE MILITARY HAS SET AN EXAMPLE FOR THE REST OF SOCIETY-- AN EXAMPLE OF SELF-SACRIFICE AND BRAVERY AND DEDICATION. IS THAT WHAT THE AMERICAN MILITARY DOES? YOU MEN KNOW THE ANSWER TO THAT AS WELL AS I, AND THE ANSWER IS A RESOUNDING *NO!*
9



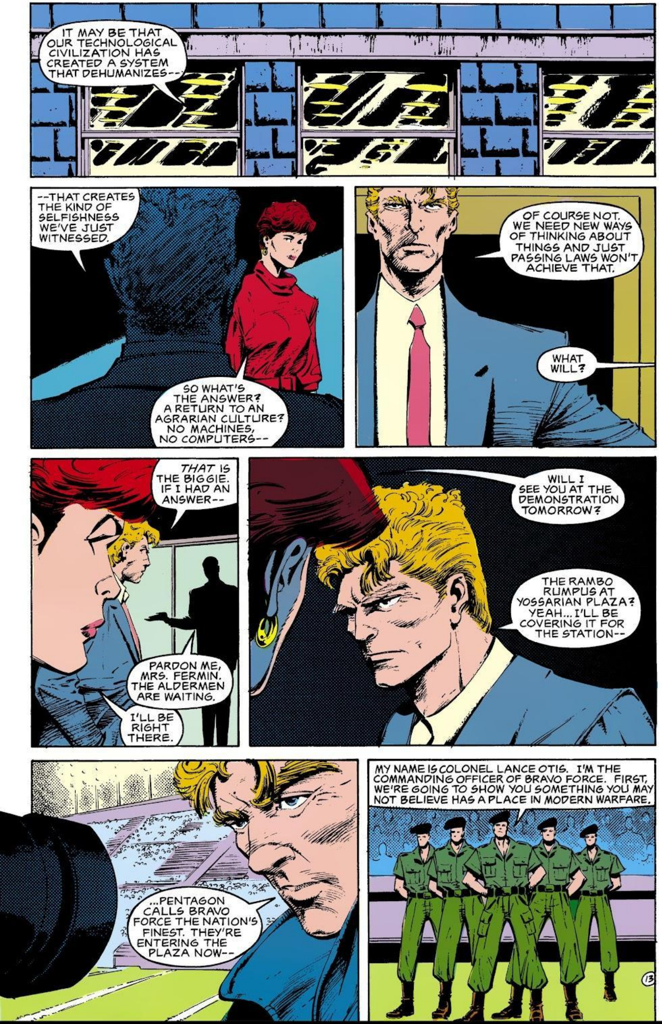
SO WE HAVE TRIED TO MAKE OUR POINT IN SMALL WAYS AND WE HAVE FAILED. IT IS TIME FOR A GRAND GESTURE.
WE WILL KILL THE BRAVO TEAM. WE WILL KILL THEM ALL. ARE YOU WITH ME?
YES, SIR.
...MAKES THE FOURTH CAREER MILITARY MAN KILLED IN THE PAST MONTH-- TWO IN SAN FRANCISCO, ONE IN CHICAGO AND NOW ONE HERE IN HUB CITY. POLICE AND FBI ADMIT THEY HAVE NO LEADS.
MAYOR WESLEY FERMIN TOLD REPORTERS THAT IT IS A COMMUNIST PLOT, AND, A BIT LATER, THAT IT IS A HIPPIE PLOT AND FINALLY THAT IT IS A COMMIE-HIPPIE-PINKO PLOT. HE HASN'T MENTIONED FLYING SAUCERS. YET.
VIC SAGE, REPORTING.
A KBEL PROGRAM REMINDER--TONIGHT'S LATE MOVIE IS CHINESE WIPEOUT STARRING RANDY VIOLENT--
YOU HAD TO DO IT, DIDN'T YOU?
LOOK BOTH WAYS BEFORE CROSSING? FLOSS AFTER EVERY MEAL? GIVE AT THE OFFICE? WHAT ARE WE TALKING ABOUT HERE, FINCH?
EDITORIALIZE. THAT CRACK ABOUT FERMIN--
A FRENCH STATESMAN SAID WE GET THE GOVERNMENT WE DESERVE. MAYBE HE WAS RIGHT. BUT I BELIEVE WE *DON'T* DESERVE THE LIKES OF FERMIN AND IT'S MY DUTY TO REMIND PEOPLE OF THAT.
YOU'RE WRONG. YOUR DUTY IS TO REPORT THE NEWS AND THEN SHUT UP.
AND YOU CAN TAKE YOUR *FRENCH STATESMEN*--
10



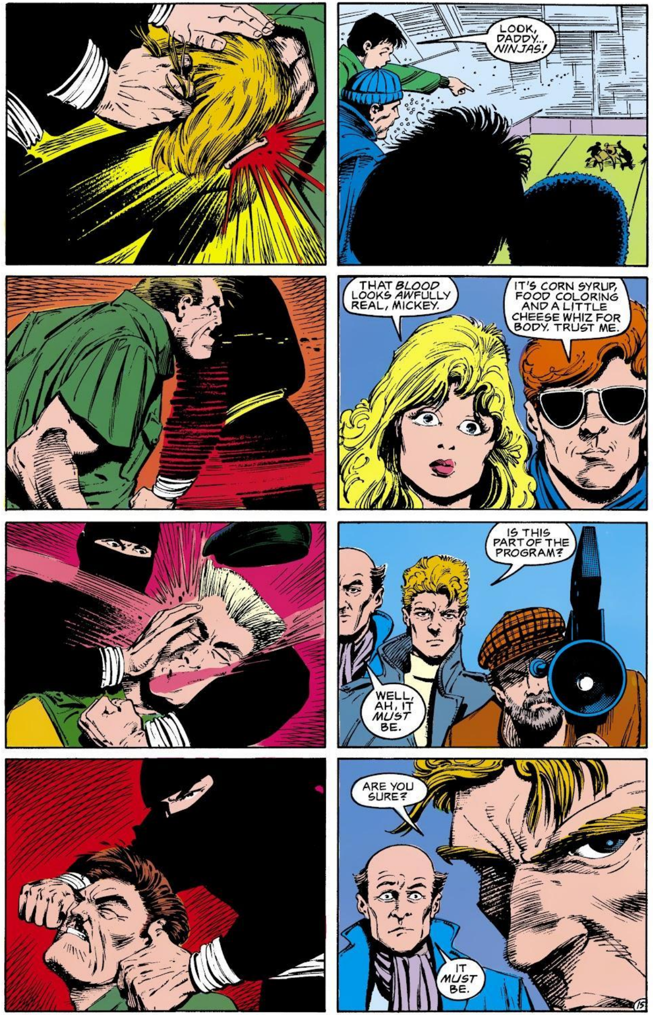
--AND PUT 'UM WHERE THE SUN DOES NOT SHINE!
WHAT'S HAPPENING IN THE HUB ON THE WEEKEND, CANDY?
GUESS YOU TOLD HIM.
I'M NOT SO SURE HE DIDN'T TELL ME!
WHO IS THAT GIRL... WOMAN?
NEW PRODUCTION ASSISTANT. NAME'S, AH... HECK, I DON'T REMEMBER.
WELL, ANDY, ON SATURDAY AT YOSSARIAN PLAZA--
--THE ELITE BRAVO TEAM WILL STAGE A DEMONSTRATION OF HAND-TO-HAND COMBAT.
BRAVO TEAM, EH? EXACTLY WHAT IS THAT, CANDY?
VIC...WE GOT THE GUY YOU WANTED.
AS I UNDERSTAND IT, ANDY, IT'S A FIGHTING TEAM MADE UP OF MEN FROM ALL BRANCHES OF THE SERVICE--
--CITY HALL STRINGER TRACKED HIM DOWN.
I'M ON MY WAY.
I'LL SEE IF I CAN COLLECT A CAMERA CREW.
--ADMISSION IS FREE TO ALL HUB CITIERS WHO SHOW UP. AND ANYONE ELSE, I GUESS.
CITY HA
...DIDN'T YOU KNOW IT WAS IMPORTANT?
WASN'T THE ENGINEER'S REPORT MARKED "URGENT"?
YAH, I GUESS SO. SURE. SO WHAT?
11



SO NINE PEOPLE ARE DEAD BECAUSE THE BRIDGE FELL APART, AND THE TOTAL WILL PROBABLY BE ELEVEN BEFORE MORNING. BECAUSE YOU DIDN'T PROCESS A REPORT.
LOOK, FELLA, THAT REPORT COME IN FOUR-FIFTEEN. QUITTING TIME'S FOUR-THIRTY. IT'D TAKE AT LEAST A HALF-HOUR TO DO THE PAPER-WORK ON IT.
BESIDES, MY VACATION WAS STARTING. I MEAN, YOU WOULDN'T EXPECT ME TO HANG AROUND FOR A LOUSY REPORT, WOULD'JA?
YOU WANT TO DO THE SAME THING I WANT TO DO, VIC.
DON'T.
MISTER, YOU'RE FIRED.
'FRAID NOT, LADY, I GOT A UNION BEHIND ME. AND ACCORDING TO THE RULES--
--I DIDN'T DO ANYTHING WRONG.
SEE YA.
YOU HEARD HIM. THERE'S NOTHING I CAN DO.
YOU PROBABLY HAVEN'T CONSIDERED MURDER.
ANYTHING ELSE, MRS. FERMIN?
KEEP AN EYE ON HIM. LET HIM KNOW YOU'RE KEEPING AN EYE ON HIM. MAYBE IT'LL MAKE HIM NERVOUS ENOUGH TO DO SOMETHING STUPID.
A FEW DAYS AGO YOU ASKED ME WHY I WAS RUNNING FOR OFFICE. YOU JUST SAW THE ANSWER.
I HEAR YOU. BUT I'M NOT SURE POLITICS IS THE ANSWER TO THIS KIND OF PROBLEM. IT MAY NOT BE LEGISLATABLE.
12


IT MAY BE THAT OUR TECHNOLOGICAL CIVILIZATION HAS CREATED A SYSTEM THAT DEHUMANIZES--
--THAT CREATES THE KIND OF SELFISHNESS WE'VE JUST WITNESSED.
SO WHAT'S THE ANSWER? A RETURN TO AN AGRARIAN CULTURE? NO MACHINES, NO COMPUTERS--
OF COURSE NOT. WE NEED NEW WAYS OF THINKING ABOUT THINGS AND JUST PASSING LAWS WON'T ACHIEVE THAT.
WHAT WILL?
THAT IS THE BIGGIE. IF I HAD AN ANSWER--
PARDON ME, MRS. FERMIN. THE ALDERMEN ARE WAITING.
I'LL BE RIGHT THERE.
WILL I SEE YOU AT THE DEMONSTRATION TOMORROW?
THE RAMBO RUMPUS AT YOSSARIAN PLAZA? YEAH... I'LL BE COVERING IT FOR THE STATION--
...PENTAGON CALLS BRAVO FORCE THE NATION'S FINEST. THEY'RE ENTERING THE PLAZA NOW--
MY NAME IS COLONEL LANCE OTIS. I'M THE COMMANDING OFFICER OF BRAVO FORCE. FIRST, WE'RE GOING TO SHOW YOU SOMETHING YOU MAY NOT BELIEVE HAS A PLACE IN MODERN WARFARE.
13

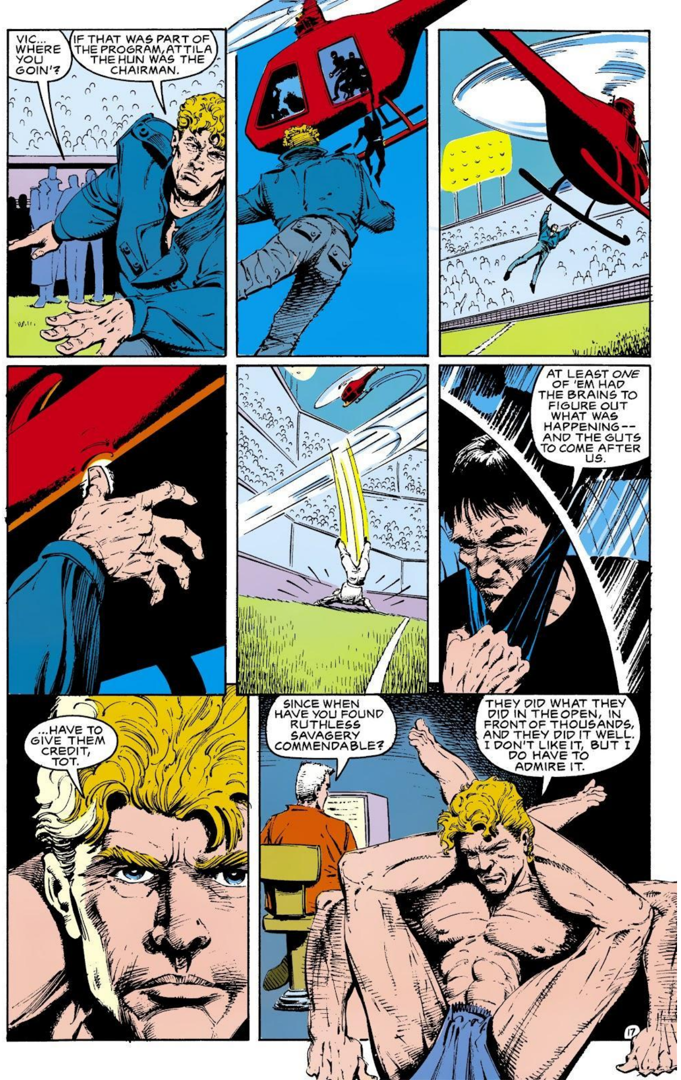

--HAND TO HAND COMBAT WE'LL BE USING THE MOST PRIMITIVE OF WEAPONS, KNIVES. AND BY THE WAY, OUR BLADES HAVE *NOT* BEEN DULLED--
YOU ARE COWARDS AND WEAKLINGS AND FOOLS. WE CHALLENGE YOU--
WHAT THE HELL--?
--MAN TO MAN COMBAT. TO THE DEATH. THERE ARE FOUR OF US, SEVEN OF YOU.
WILL SOMEBODY GET THIS LUNATIC OUT OF HERE?
KILL THEM.
HGUGH
14

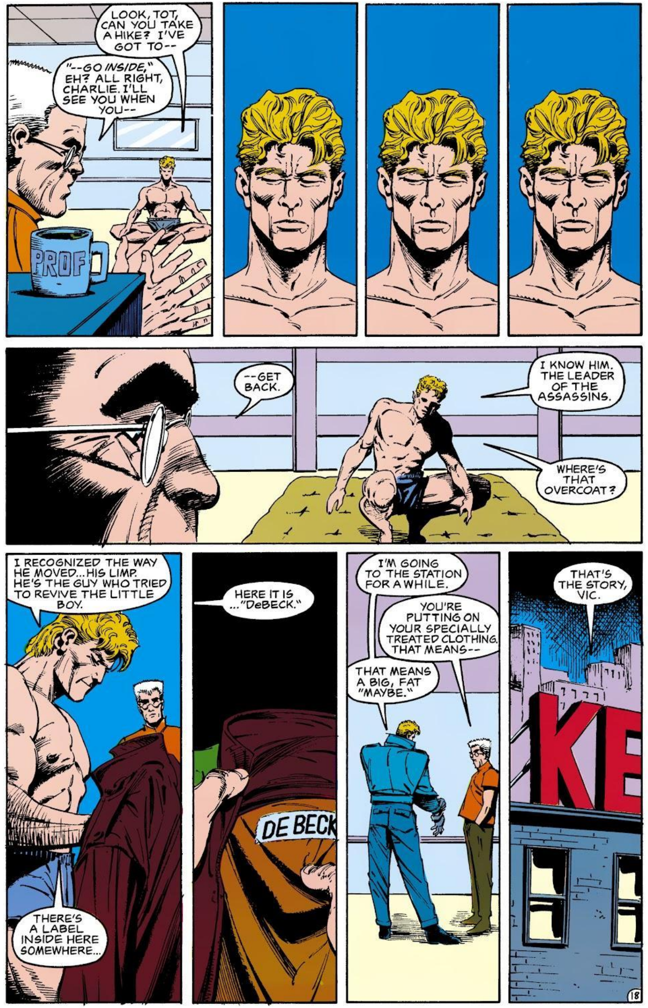


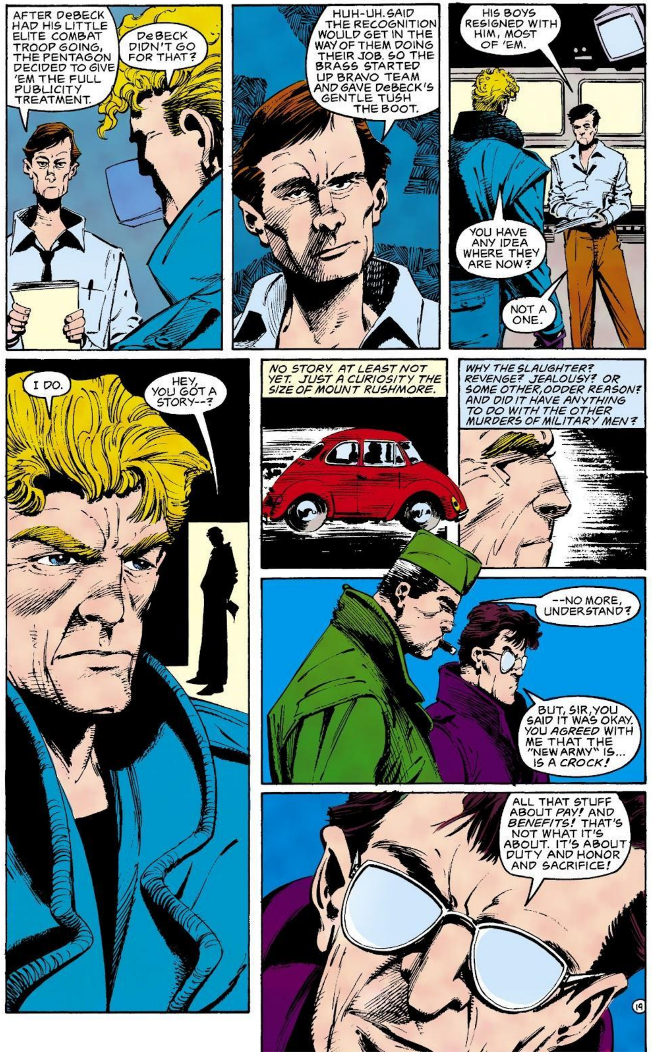
LOOK, DADDY... *NINJAS!*
THAT *BLOOD* LOOKS *AWFULLY* REAL, MICKEY.
IT'S CORN SYRUP, FOOD COLORING AND A LITTLE CHEESE WHIZ FOR BODY. TRUST ME.
IS THIS PART OF THE PROGRAM?
WELL, AH, IT *MUST* BE.
ARE YOU SURE?
IT *MUST* BE.
15



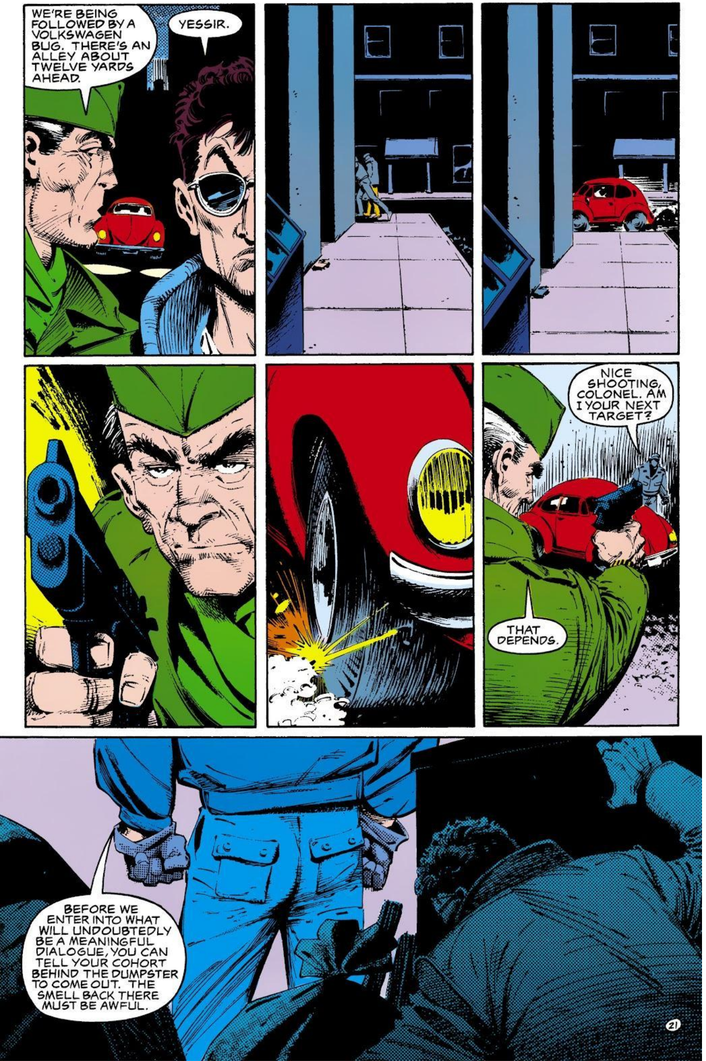
YOU KILLED MY BUDDY, YOU SON OF A--
YEICHH
HOW DO THEY MAKE IT SQUIRT LIKE THAT?
T-THEY DON'T...
FINISH THEM.
THEY WERE SEVEN--THE CREAM OF AMERICA'S FIGHTING FORCES. WE ARE BUT FOUR. WE DESTROYED THEM IN A MATTER OF SECONDS.
LOOK AT YOURSELVES, AMERICANS, AND BEWARE.
16


VIC... WHERE YOU GOIN'?
IF THAT WAS PART OF THE PROGRAM, ATTILA THE HUN WAS THE CHAIRMAN.
AT LEAST ONE OF 'EM HAD THE BRAINS TO FIGURE OUT WHAT WAS HAPPENING-- AND THE GUTS TO COME AFTER US.
...HAVE TO GIVE THEM CREDIT, TOT.
SINCE WHEN HAVE YOU FOUND RUTHLESS SAVAGERY COMMENDABLE?
THEY DID WHAT THEY DID IN THE OPEN, IN FRONT OF THOUSANDS, AND THEY DID IT WELL. I DON'T LIKE IT, BUT I DO HAVE TO ADMIRE IT.


LOOK, TOT, CAN YOU TAKE A HIKE? I'VE GOT TO--
"--GO INSIDE," EH? ALL RIGHT, CHARLIE. I'LL SEE YOU WHEN YOU--
--GET BACK.
I KNOW HIM. THE LEADER OF THE ASSASSINS.
WHERE'S THAT OVERCOAT?
I RECOGNIZED THE WAY HE MOVED...HIS LIMP. HE'S THE GUY WHO TRIED TO REVIVE THE LITTLE BOY.
THERE'S A LABEL INSIDE HERE SOMEWHERE...
HERE IT IS ..."DeBECK."
DE BECK
I'M GOING TO THE STATION FOR A WHILE.
YOU'RE PUTTING ON YOUR SPECIALLY TREATED CLOTHING. THAT MEANS--
THAT MEANS A BIG, FAT "MAYBE."
THAT'S THE STORY, VIC.


AFTER DeBECK HAD HIS LITTLE ELITE COMBAT TROOP GOING, THE PENTAGON DECIDED TO GIVE 'EM THE FULL PUBLICITY TREATMENT.
DeBECK DIDN'T GO FOR THAT?
HUH-UH. SAID THE RECOGNITION WOULD GET IN THE WAY OF THEM DOING THEIR JOB. SO THE BRASS STARTED UP BRAVO TEAM AND GAVE DeBECK'S GENTLE TUSH THE BOOT.
HIS BOYS RESIGNED WITH HIM, MOST OF 'EM.
YOU HAVE ANY IDEA WHERE THEY ARE NOW?
NOT A ONE.
I DO.
HEY, YOU GOT A STORY--?
NO STORY. AT LEAST NOT YET. JUST A CURIOSITY THE SIZE OF MOUNT RUSHMORE.
WHY THE SLAUGHTER? REVENGE? JEALOUSY? OR SOME OTHER, ODDER REASON? AND DID IT HAVE ANYTHING TO DO WITH THE OTHER MURDERS OF MILITARY MEN?
--NO MORE, UNDERSTAND?
BUT, SIR, YOU SAID IT WAS OKAY. YOU AGREED WITH ME THAT THE "NEW ARMY" IS... IS A CROCK!
ALL THAT STUFF ABOUT PAY! AND BENEFITS! THAT'S NOT WHAT IT'S ABOUT. IT'S ABOUT DUTY AND HONOR AND SACRIFICE!
19


MAYBE IT WAS BLIND CHANCE THAT DeBECK WAS AT THE BRIDGE COLLAPSE. OR MAYBE HE'S STAYING NEARBY--
ALL YOU SAY IS TRUE. BUT TERMINATING RECRUITING SERGEANTS WON'T CHANGE IT. WHAT WE DID YESTERDAY--
BINGO! THERE HE IS, WITH ANOTHER GUY... LIMPING ALONG WITHOUT A CARE IN THE WORLD--
GABE'S
--THAT MAKES A STATEMENT. THAT DEMONSTRATES HOW PITIFULLY INADEQUATE THEIR WAY REALLY IS.
THIS MAY NOT BE A NEWS STORY. SO SAGE SHOULD VANISH--
--AND THE QUESTION APPEAR.
20


WE'RE BEING FOLLOWED BY A VOLKSWAGEN BUG. THERE'S AN ALLEY ABOUT TWELVE YARDS AHEAD.
YESSIR.
NICE SHOOTING, COLONEL. AM I YOUR NEXT TARGET?
THAT DEPENDS.
BEFORE WE ENTER INTO WHAT WILL UNDOUBTEDLY BE A MEANINGFUL DIALOGUE, YOU CAN TELL YOUR COHORT BEHIND THE DUMPSTER TO COME OUT. THE SMELL BACK THERE MUST BE AWFUL.
21


YOU HEARD HIM, SON.
YESSIR.
HOW DO YOU KNOW WHO I AM?
YOU MADE A COUPLE OF MISTAKES. THE FIRST WAS GETTING SHOT IN CAMBODIA WHEN YOU WERE NINETEEN.
MY LIMP, EH? THAT WOULD MAKE YOU THE MAN WHO TRIED TO RESCUE THE BOY, AND WHO CHASED US YESTERDAY.
QUICK, COLONEL. VERY QUICK.
ARE YOU THE LAW?
DO I LOOK LIKE THE LAW?
TERMINATE, SIR?
LET HIM TRY, COLONEL DeBECK. MAYBE THAT'LL TELL YOU SOMETHING YOU'D LIKE TO KNOW.
22

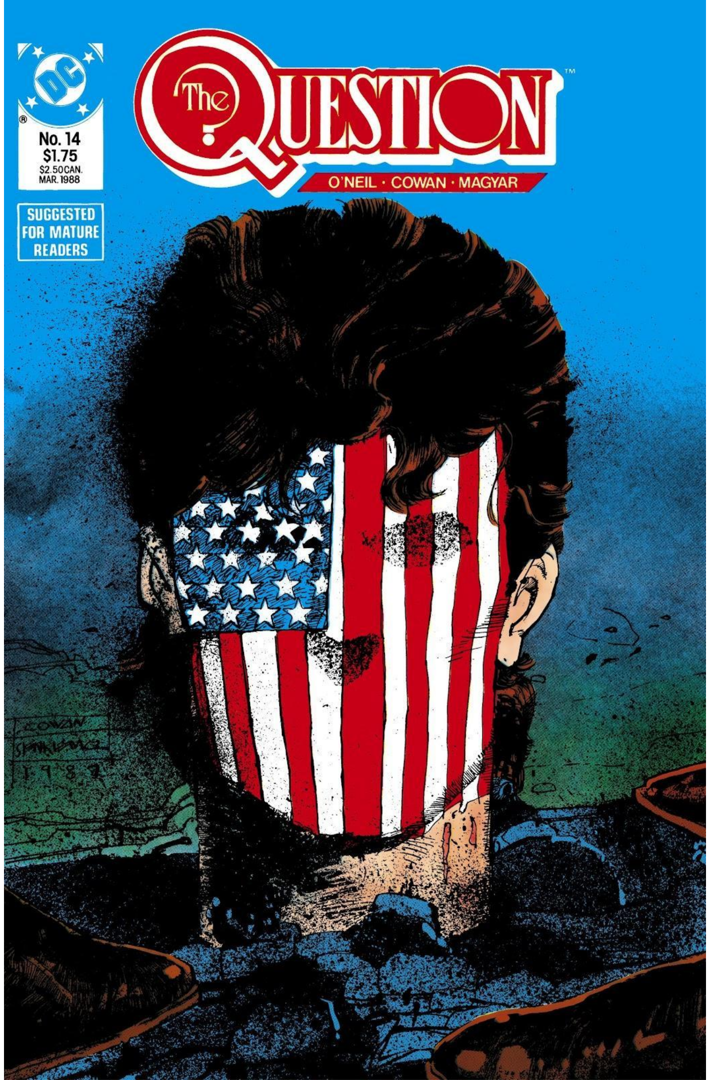

GO AHEAD, SON.


D-DON'T KILL... HIM...
YOUR BOY'S IN NO CONDITION TO KILL ANYONE. I BROKE HIS ARM. HIS JAW TOO, I THINK.
NOT HIM--
--THEM!

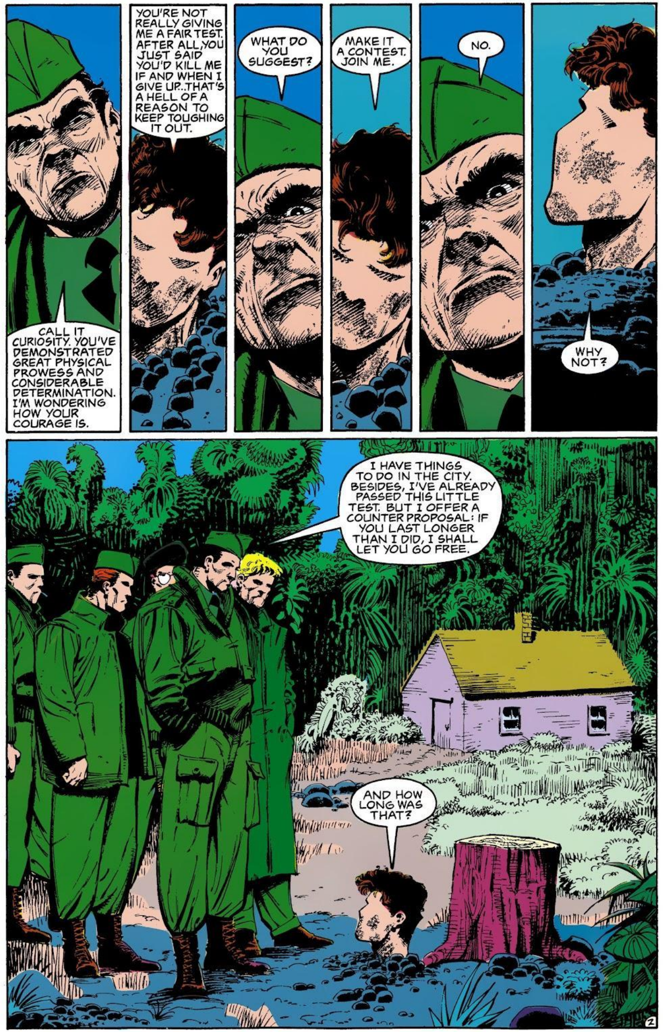

WELL, WELL. THE REST OF YOUR HAPPY CREW. WHERE'D THEY COME FROM?
T-THERE'S A TRANSMITTER IN MY HOLSTER. WHEN I DREW MY WEAPON, IT BROADCAST A SIGNAL.
AND THEY HOMED IN ON US WITH THAT RECEIVER. CLEVER.
TAKE HIM.




ENOUGH.
YOU'RE GOOD. YOU'RE VERY GOOD. MY MEN ARE THE BEST DISCIPLINED AND TRAINED SOLDIERS IN THE WORLD--
--AND DESPITE THE ODDS, YOU ALMOST BEAT THEM.
I WANT TO KNOW EXACTLY HOW GOOD YOU ARE. I WANT TO KNOW HOW LONG YOU CAN STAY THERE BEFORE YOU SCREAM.
THEN, OF COURSE, WE WILL KILL YOU.
TO BE CONTINUED...
27


The QUESTION
No. 14
$1.75
$2.50 CAN.
MAR. 1988
SUGGESTED FOR MATURE READERS
O'NEIL · COWAN · MAGYAR


Saving Face
I WANT TO KNOW EXACTLY HOW GOOD YOU ARE. I WANT TO KNOW HOW LONG YOU CAN STAY THERE BEFORE YOU SCREAM.
THEN, OF COURSE, WE WILL KILL YOU.
OKAY, BUT WHAT'S THE POINT?
STORY DENNY O'NEIL
ART DENYS COWAN & RICK MAGYAR
LETTERS STEVE HAYNIE
COLORS TATJANA WOOD
EDITS MIKE GOLD

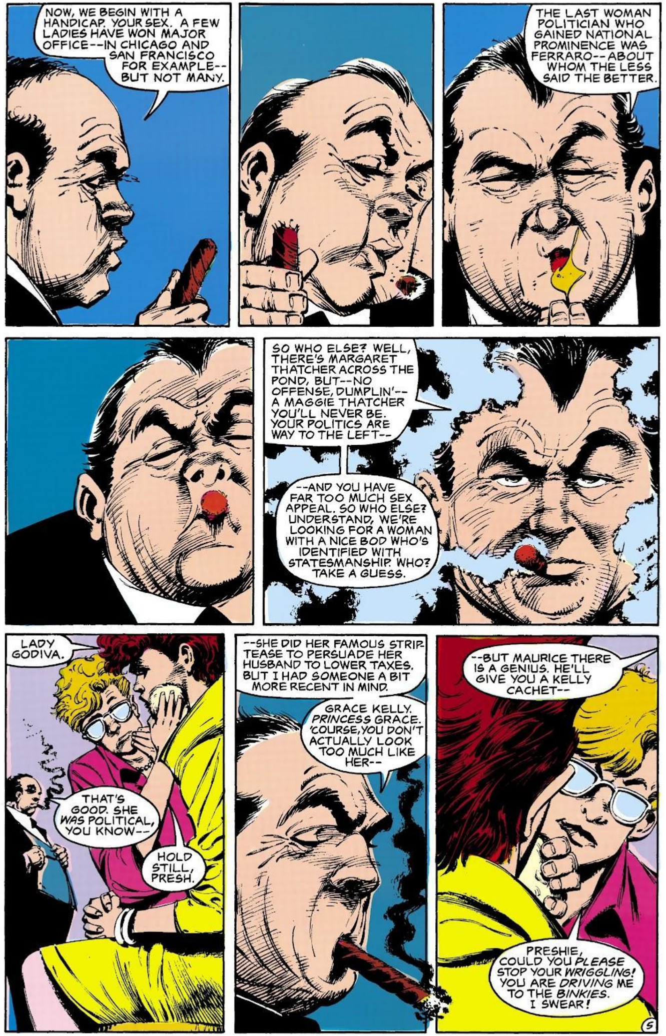

CALL IT CURIOSITY. YOU'VE DEMONSTRATED GREAT PHYSICAL PROWESS AND CONSIDERABLE DETERMINATION. I'M WONDERING HOW YOUR COURAGE IS.
YOU'RE NOT REALLY GIVING ME A FAIR TEST. AFTER ALL, YOU JUST SAID YOU'D KILL ME IF AND WHEN I GIVE UP...THAT'S A HELL OF A REASON TO KEEP TOUGHING IT OUT.
WHAT DO YOU SUGGEST?
MAKE IT A CONTEST. JOIN ME.
NO.
WHY NOT?
I HAVE THINGS TO DO IN THE CITY. BESIDES, I'VE ALREADY PASSED THIS LITTLE TEST. BUT I OFFER A COUNTER PROPOSAL: IF YOU LAST LONGER THAN I DID, I SHALL LET YOU GO FREE.
AND HOW LONG WAS THAT?
2



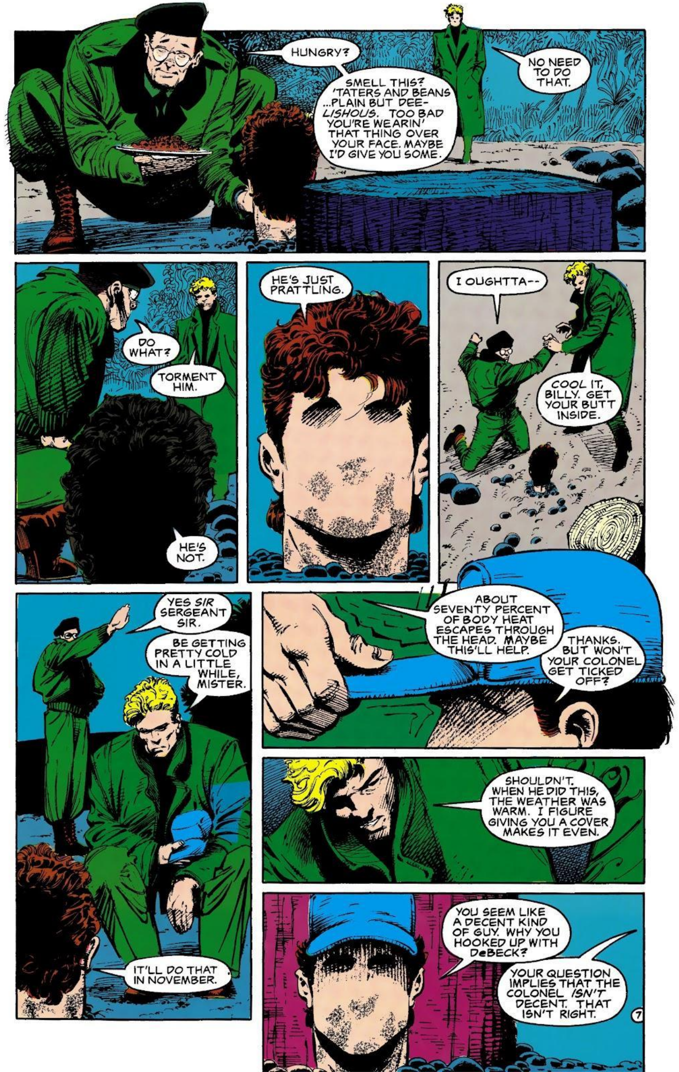
IF I TOLD, IT WOULD COMPROMISE THE TEST AS MUCH AS MY ORIGINAL PLAN TO KILL YOU REGARDLESS. SO INSTEAD--
--I'LL CARVE THE NUMBER OF DAYS HERE.
WHERE I CAN'T SEE THEM.
BUT MY MEN CAN.
YOUR MEN!
AH, BUT YOU DO NOT UNDERSTAND, DO YOU? THEY ARE, AS YOU SAY, MY MEN --BUT MORE THAN THAT--
--THEY ARE HONORABLE MEN. THEY WILL JUDGE YOU FAIRLY ...THEY WILL ACT FAIRLY.
THAT'S WHAT THIS IS ALL ABOUT. DON'T YOU SEE? THERE IS NO HONOR LEFT IN AMERICA, AND WITHOUT HONOR, THERE IS NO COURAGE, AND WITHOUT COURAGE THERE IS NO STRENGTH.
THAT'S WHY WE KILLED THOSE SO-CALLED SOLDIERS IN HUB CITY... TO DEMON-STRATE THEIR WEAKNESS.
3



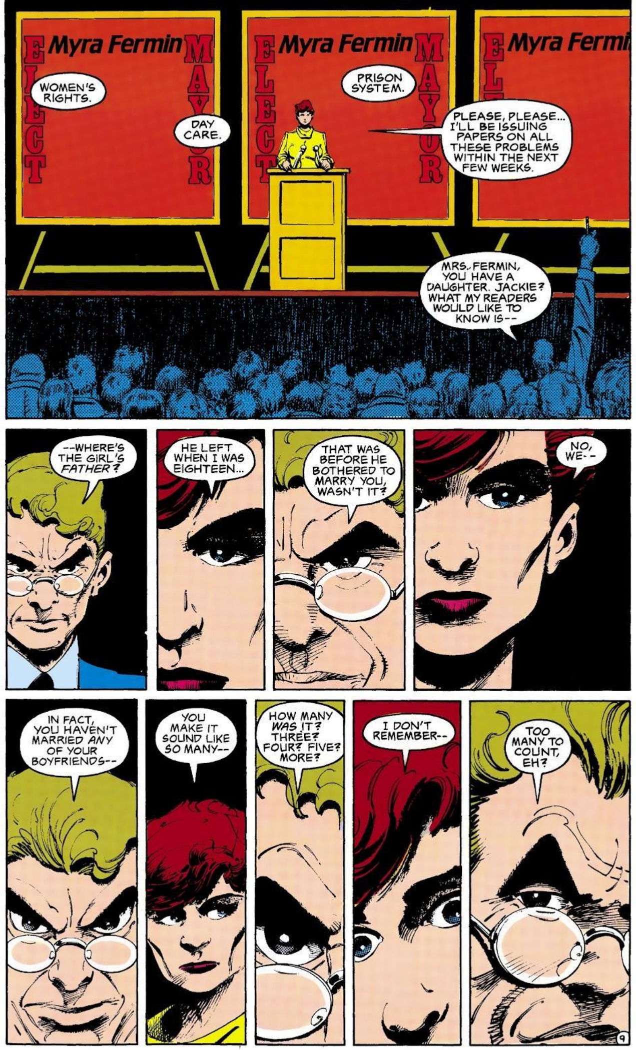
WERE YOU EVER IN THE MILITARY?
BRIEFLY. I PUNCHED OUT A DRILL SERGEANT AND THEY SENT ME HOME.
COLONEL, I WANNA GET ME A LOOK AT WHAT'S UNDER THAT THING HE'S WEARIN' ON HIS FACE.
LOTS OF LUCK, SONNY.
TO REMOVE THE MASK YOU'D HAVE TO MANIPULATE CONTROLS IN MY BELT BUCKLE. TO DO THAT, YOU'D HAVE TO UNBURY ME...
...BURY ME UNDER EIGHTEEN LAYERS OF GOO?
AM I THAT UGLY?
HOLD STILL, PRESH.
'COURSE YOU'RE NOT, DUMPLIN'--
--WHO THE GREAT UNWASHED THINK YOU ARE. I'M TALKING IMAGE, DUMPLIN'. GIVE THE UNWASHED AN IMAGE THEY CAN CHERISH--
--BUT YOU ARE ABOUT TO ANNOUNCE YOUR CANDIDACY FOR MAYOR OF THIS DUBIOUS METROPOLIS, YOU ARE ABOUT TO ENTER CIVILIZATION'S NASTIEST ARENA, THE ARENA OF MODERN POLITICS.
HOLD STILL, PRESH.
NOW, IN THIS ARENA, WHO YOU ARE IS OF LITTLE MATTER AND WHAT YOU CAN DO IS OF LESS. THE IMPORTANT THING IS--
--AND THEY WILL GIVE YOU THE PRIZE YOU COVET--THE MAYORALTY OF HUB CITY.
ARE YOU WITH ME SO FAR?
GO ON.
4


NOW, WE BEGIN WITH A HANDICAP. YOUR SEX. A FEW LADIES HAVE WON MAJOR OFFICE--IN CHICAGO AND SAN FRANCISCO FOR EXAMPLE--BUT NOT MANY.
THE LAST WOMAN POLITICIAN WHO GAINED NATIONAL PROMINENCE WAS FERRARO--ABOUT WHOM THE LESS SAID THE BETTER.
SO WHO ELSE? WELL, THERE'S MARGARET THATCHER ACROSS THE POND, BUT--NO OFFENSE, DUMPLIN'--A MAGGIE THATCHER YOU'LL NEVER BE. YOUR POLITICS ARE WAY TO THE LEFT--
--AND YOU HAVE FAR TOO MUCH SEX APPEAL. SO WHO ELSE? UNDERSTAND, WE'RE LOOKING FOR A WOMAN WITH A NICE BOD WHO'S IDENTIFIED WITH STATESMANSHIP. WHO? TAKE A GUESS.
LADY GODIVA.
THAT'S GOOD. SHE WAS POLITICAL, YOU KNOW--
HOLD STILL, PRESH.
--SHE DID HER FAMOUS STRIP-TEASE TO PERSUADE HER HUSBAND TO LOWER TAXES. BUT I HAD SOMEONE A BIT MORE RECENT IN MIND.
GRACE KELLY. PRINCESS GRACE. 'COURSE, YOU DON'T ACTUALLY LOOK TOO MUCH LIKE HER--
--BUT MAURICE THERE IS A GENIUS. HE'LL GIVE YOU A KELLY CACHET--
PRESHIE, COULD YOU PLEASE STOP YOUR WRIGGLING! YOU ARE DRIVING ME TO THE BINKIES. I SWEAR!
5

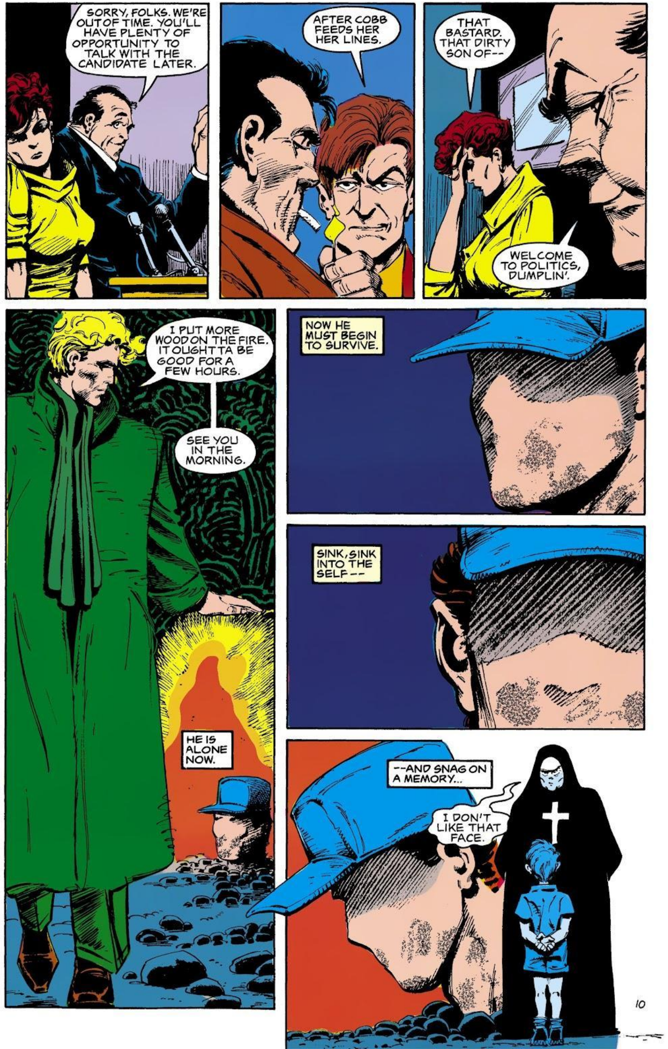

TAKE FIVE, MAURICE. POLISH YOUR CHAINS FOR A WHILE.
COBB, YOU ARE SUPPOSED TO BE A POLITICAL WIZARD... RIGHT UP THERE WITH GARTH AND CADDELL.
THAT I AM, DUMPLIN'.
I REALIZE YOU'RE TAKING ON THIS THIRD-RATE CAMPAIGN IN OUR FOURTH-RATE TOWN ONLY BECAUSE YOU NEED THE WORK... YOUR LITTLE STAY IN PRISON LEFT YOU ON YOUR UPPERS--
I WAS FRAMED.
BUT UNDERSTAND THIS... I WILL NOT BE CONDESCENDED TO.
HAD YOUR SAY? OKAY, NOW YOU UNDERSTAND SOMETHING, MRS. FERMIN--
--WITHOUT ME, YOU HAVE NOT ONE SINGLE CHANCE OF BEING ELECTED. WITHOUT ME, YOUR CAMPAIGN WILL MAKE GERALDINE FERRARO'S LOOK LIKE A GLORIOUS TRIUMPH. SO YOU WILL ACCEPT WHATEVER I HAND OUT AND YOU WILL SMILE AND SAY THANK YOU. UNDERSTAND?
YES. DAMNIT.
FINISH HER UP, MAURICE. WE'VE ONLY GOT AN HOUR TILL THE PRESS CONFERENCE.
PRESHY, WILL YOU--
--HOLD STILL. WHATEVER YOU SAY, MAURICE.
THAT'S MY PRECIOUS.
YOU STILL ALIVE IN THERE?
6


HUNGRY?
SMELL THIS? 'TATERS AND BEANS ...PLAIN BUT DEE-LISHOUS. TOO BAD YOU'RE WEARIN' THAT THING OVER YOUR FACE. MAYBE I'D GIVE YOU SOME.
NO NEED TO DO THAT.
DO WHAT?
TORMENT HIM.
HE'S NOT.
HE'S JUST PRATTLING.
I OUGHTTA--
COOL IT, BILLY. GET YOUR BUTT INSIDE.
YES SIR SERGEANT SIR.
BE GETTING PRETTY COLD IN A LITTLE WHILE, MISTER.
IT'LL DO THAT IN NOVEMBER.
ABOUT SEVENTY PERCENT OF BODY HEAT ESCAPES THROUGH THE HEAD. MAYBE THIS'LL HELP.
THANKS. BUT WON'T YOUR COLONEL GET TICKED OFF?
SHOULDN'T. WHEN HE DID THIS, THE WEATHER WAS WARM. I FIGURE GIVING YOU A COVER MAKES IT EVEN.
YOU SEEM LIKE A DECENT KIND OF GUY. WHY YOU HOOKED UP WITH DeBECK?
YOUR QUESTION IMPLIES THAT THE COLONEL ISN'T DECENT. THAT ISN'T RIGHT.
7


HE'S THE MOST DECENT MAN I EVER MET. FOUND US IN BRIGS AND STOCKADES AND HOLDING COMPANIES, BROUGHT US SOMETHING TO LIVE FOR. GAVE US IDEALS.
THEN WHAT HAPPENED?
THEN THE MEN IN POWER SOUGHT TO PERVERT THOSE IDEALS--
--AND I REFUSED TO LET THAT HAPPEN.
IT WOULD'VE BEEN HORRIBLE... TO GIVE US IDEALS AND THEN TAKE 'EM AWAY.
MAYBE FOR YOU. BUT YOUR MAN BILLY THERE--
--I READ HIM AS A BORDERLINE SOCIOPATH. OR WORSE.
I THINK MAYBE WHAT YOU GAVE HIM WAS AN EXCUSE TO UNCORK A LOT OF HOMICIDAL RAGE.
YOU'RE IN NO POSITION TO JUDGE.
I'M NOT IN MUCH OF A POSITION TO DO ANYTHING--
--POSITION ON BUSING, MRS. FERMIN.
AFFIRMATIVE ACTION
LABOR
POSITION ON HIGHWAYS
PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION
8



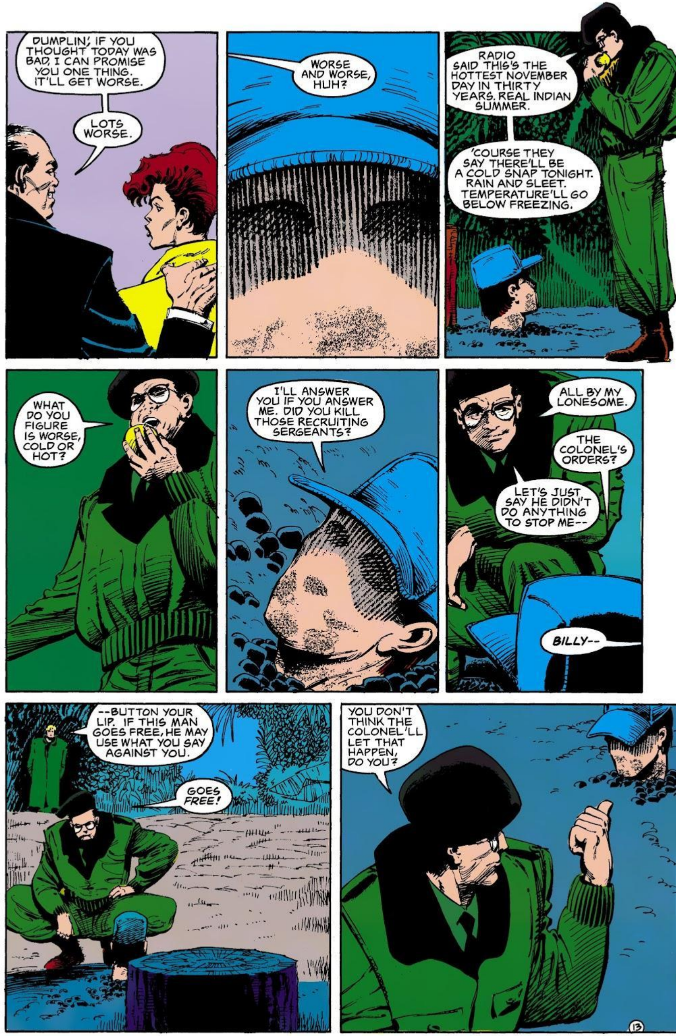
ELECT Myra Fermin MAYOR
WOMEN'S RIGHTS.
DAY CARE.
PRISON SYSTEM.
PLEASE, PLEASE... I'LL BE ISSUING PAPERS ON ALL THESE PROBLEMS WITHIN THE NEXT FEW WEEKS.
MRS. FERMIN, YOU HAVE A DAUGHTER. JACKIE? WHAT MY READERS WOULD LIKE TO KNOW IS--
--WHERE'S THE GIRL'S *FATHER*?
HE LEFT WHEN I WAS EIGHTEEN...
THAT WAS BEFORE HE BOTHERED TO MARRY YOU, WASN'T IT?
NO, WE--
IN FACT, YOU HAVEN'T MARRIED *ANY* OF YOUR BOYFRIENDS--
YOU MAKE IT SOUND LIKE SO MANY--
HOW MANY *WAS* IT? THREE? FOUR? FIVE? MORE?
I DON'T REMEMBER--
TOO MANY TO COUNT, EH?
9

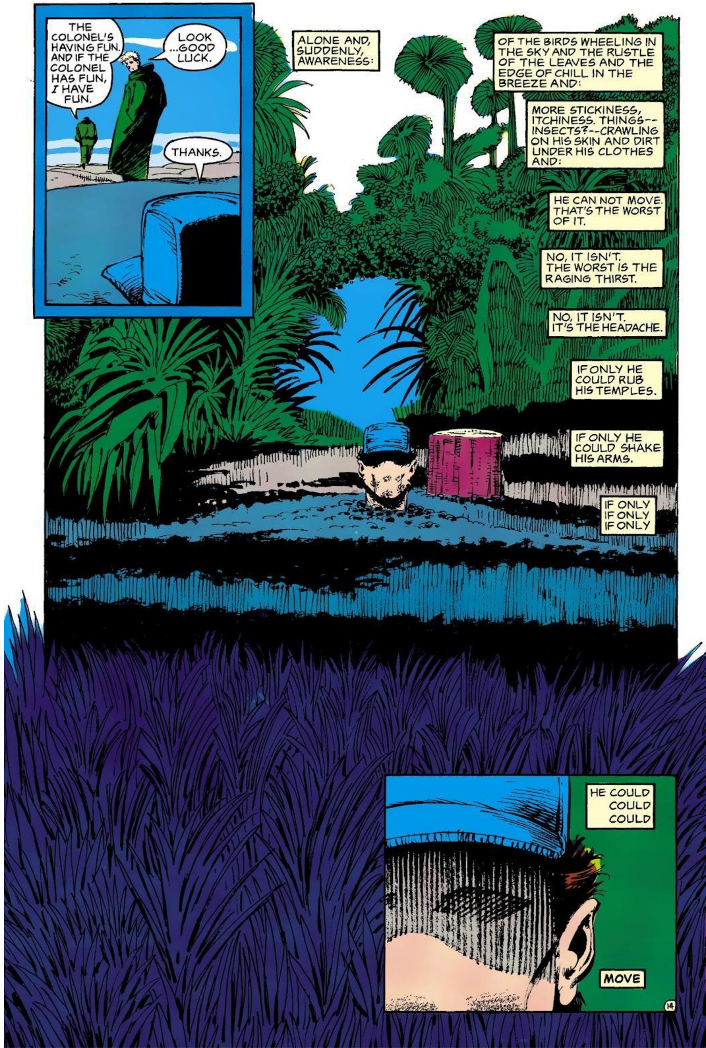


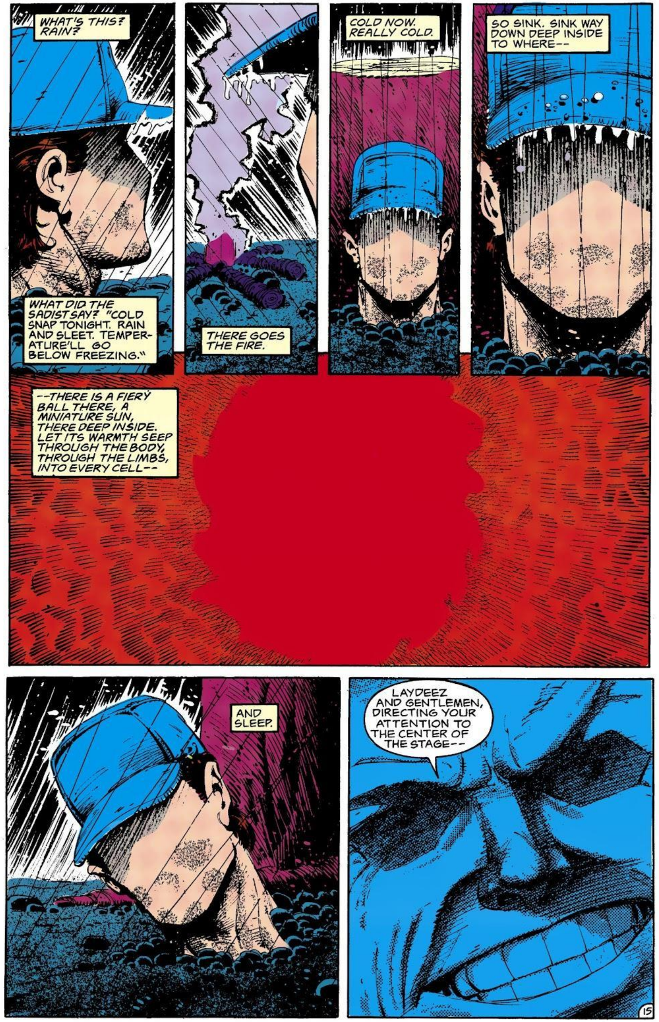
SORRY, FOLKS. WE'RE OUT OF TIME. YOU'LL HAVE PLENTY OF OPPORTUNITY TO TALK WITH THE CANDIDATE LATER.
AFTER COBB FEEDS HER HER LINES.
THAT BASTARD. THAT DIRTY SON OF--
WELCOME TO POLITICS, DUMPLIN'.
I PUT MORE WOOD ON THE FIRE. IT OUGHTTA BE GOOD FOR A FEW HOURS.
SEE YOU IN THE MORNING.
HE IS ALONE NOW.
NOW HE MUST BEGIN TO SURVIVE.
SINK, SINK INTO THE SELF--
--AND SNAG ON A MEMORY...
I DON'T LIKE THAT FACE.
10


YOU JUST GET IN THE CLOSET, MISTER MAN. I'LL LET YOU OUT WHEN YOU KNOW HOW TO BE *DECENT*.
JUST GET IN THERE.
WEREN'T YOU A BIT HARSH ON THE BOY, SISTER?
NOT HARSH ENOUGH, SISTER. NOT BY HALF.
HE HAS A DEVIL IN HIM, THAT ONE DOES.
11


WELL, MISTER MAN, WHAT DO YOU HAVE TO SAY FOR YOURSELF?
GO TO HELL.
YOU OLD SCAG.
SMILE AND SINK DEEPER, DEEPER...
GET USED TO IT, DUMPLIN'!
IT'S PART OF THE GAME YOU BOUGHT INTO. REMEMBER HART, MUSKIE-- HELL, REMEMBER STEVENSON IN FIFTY-TWO AND HOW THEY ATTACKED HIM 'CAUSE OF HIS DIVORCE.
"WE WANT A WOMAN IN THE WHITE HOUSE." 'MEMBER THAT?
I WASN'T BORN YET.
TOO BAD. IT WAS AN INTERESTING ELECTION.
12

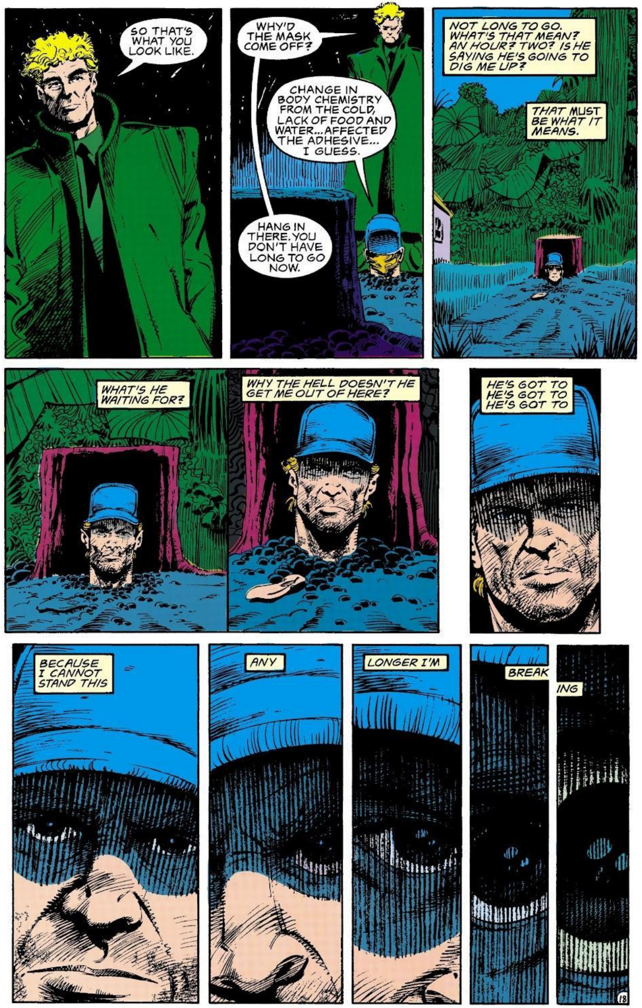

DUMPLIN', IF YOU THOUGHT TODAY WAS BAD, I CAN PROMISE YOU ONE THING. IT'LL GET WORSE.
LOTS WORSE.
WORSE AND WORSE, HUH?
RADIO SAID THIS'S THE HOTTEST NOVEMBER DAY IN THIRTY YEARS. REAL INDIAN SUMMER.
'COURSE THEY SAY THERE'LL BE A COLD SNAP TONIGHT. RAIN AND SLEET. TEMPERATURE'LL GO BELOW FREEZING.
WHAT DO YOU FIGURE IS WORSE, COLD OR HOT?
I'LL ANSWER YOU IF YOU ANSWER ME. DID YOU KILL THOSE RECRUITING SERGEANTS?
ALL BY MY LONESOME.
THE COLONEL'S ORDERS?
LET'S JUST SAY HE DIDN'T DO ANYTHING TO STOP ME--
BILLY--
--BUTTON YOUR LIP. IF THIS MAN GOES FREE, HE MAY USE WHAT YOU SAY AGAINST YOU.
GOES FREE!
YOU DON'T THINK THE COLONEL'LL LET THAT HAPPEN, DO YOU?
13


THE COLONEL'S HAVING FUN. AND IF THE COLONEL HAS FUN, I HAVE FUN.
LOOK ...GOOD LUCK.
THANKS.
ALONE AND, SUDDENLY, AWARENESS:
OF THE BIRDS WHEELING IN THE SKY AND THE RUSTLE OF THE LEAVES AND THE EDGE OF CHILL IN THE BREEZE AND:
MORE STICKINESS, ITCHINESS. THINGS--INSECTS?--CRAWLING ON HIS SKIN AND DIRT UNDER HIS CLOTHES AND:
HE CAN NOT MOVE. THAT'S THE WORST OF IT.
NO, IT ISN'T. THE WORST IS THE RAGING THIRST.
NO, IT ISN'T. IT'S THE HEADACHE.
IF ONLY HE COULD RUB HIS TEMPLES.
IF ONLY HE COULD SHAKE HIS ARMS.
IF ONLY IF ONLY IF ONLY
HE COULD COULD COULD
MOVE
14

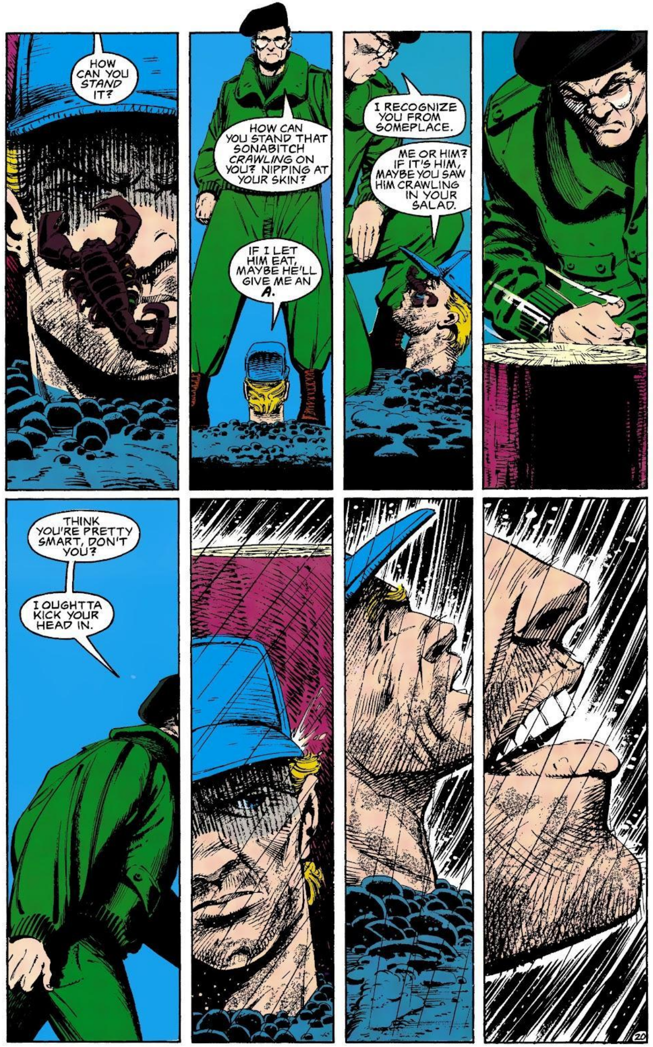

WHAT'S THIS? RAIN?
WHAT DID THE SADIST SAY? "COLD SNAP TONIGHT. RAIN AND SLEET. TEMPERATURE'LL GO BELOW FREEZING."
THERE GOES THE FIRE.
COLD NOW. REALLY COLD.
SO SINK. SINK WAY DOWN DEEP INSIDE TO WHERE--
--THERE IS A FIERY BALL THERE, A MINIATURE SUN, THERE DEEP INSIDE. LET ITS WARMTH SEEP THROUGH THE BODY, THROUGH THE LIMBS, INTO EVERY CELL--
AND SLEEP.
LAYDEEZ AND GENTLEMEN, DIRECTING YOUR ATTENTION TO THE CENTER OF THE STAGE--
15


--PREEE-SENTING THAT CLASSY CHASSIS, THAT SAUCY LASSIE, LET'S HAVE A GREAT BIG HAND FOR--
--THE FAB-YEW-LUSS MYRA.
SHAKE THAT THING.
TAKE IT OFF!
SHOW 'EM, BABY!
GO, MAMA!
16


OH, YEAH.
AIN'T THAT SWEET
TURN AROUND
LET US SEE
EVERYTHING
GOD.


SO THAT'S WHAT YOU LOOK LIKE.
WHY'D THE MASK COME OFF?
CHANGE IN BODY CHEMISTRY FROM THE COLD, LACK OF FOOD AND WATER...AFFECTED THE ADHESIVE... I GUESS.
HANG IN THERE. YOU DON'T HAVE LONG TO GO NOW.
NOT LONG TO GO. WHAT'S THAT MEAN? AN HOUR? TWO? IS HE SAYING HE'S GOING TO DIG ME UP?
THAT MUST BE WHAT IT MEANS.
WHAT'S HE WAITING FOR?
WHY THE HELL DOESN'T HE GET ME OUT OF HERE?
HE'S GOT TO
HE'S GOT TO
HE'S GOT TO
BECAUSE I CANNOT STAND THIS
ANY
LONGER I'M
BREAK
ING


This isn't Sister Agatha, you know. Sister Agatha was small potatoes.
WHO'S THAT?
Me. Richard. Your teacher.
YOU'VE CHANGED.
Then maybe I'm *not* Richard. Anyway, as I was saying... you beat Sister Agatha by toughing it out. That won't work here.
WHY NOT?
Because you're not *that* tough. Try tough and pretty soon you'll crack like an egg.
THEN *WHAT?*
You've got to-- *let go!* Let go of all the discomfort and pain and fear--
--and to do that, you first have to *accept.* Accept the discomfort and pain and fear and *cherish* it. It'll only leave when you invite it to stay.
BUT IF I CHERISH IT, I WON'T *WANT* IT TO LEAVE.
Hey, nobody said this is easy. Oh, one more thing... the future doesn't exist. Neither does the past. Only *now* exists.
YOU'RE RIGHT. YOU *ARE* RICHARD.
Then I really ought to do something about my complexion.
19


HOW CAN YOU *STAND* IT?
HOW CAN YOU STAND THAT SONABITCH *CRAWLING* ON YOU? NIPPING AT YOUR SKIN?
IF I LET HIM EAT, MAYBE HE'LL GIVE ME AN *A.*
I RECOGNIZE YOU FROM SOMEPLACE.
ME OR HIM? IF IT'S HIM, MAYBE YOU SAW HIM CRAWLING IN YOUR SALAD.
THINK YOU'RE PRETTY SMART, DON'T YOU?
I OUGHTTA KICK YOUR HEAD IN.
20


YOU MISSED.
NO I DIDN'T.
HOW YOU DOING?
NO SWEAT. A LOT OF MOISTURE, BUT NO SWEAT.
SEVENTY-FOUR HOURS. KNOW WHAT I WAS DOING AFTER SEVENTY-FOUR HOURS?
SCREAMING. SHRIEKING. BEGGING THEM TO DIG ME UP.

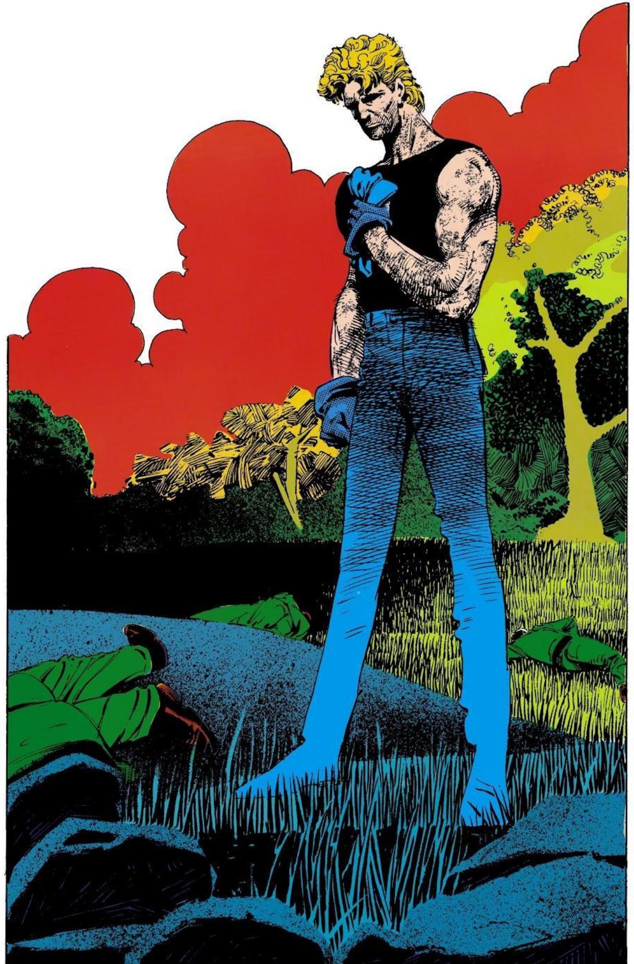

AMERICANS, THEY WERE. CIA MEN.
THEY THOUGHT I WAS SELLING SUPPLIES TO THE ASIANS. BLACK MARKET.
I CONFESSED. THEY WENT AFTER THE ASIANS. THERE WAS SHOOTING. PEOPLE DIED.
I'D LIED. I WAS INNOCENT. *EVERYONE* WAS INNOCENT.
ALONG COMES ME, A TOUGH GUY... YOU SEE A CHANCE TO PROVE THAT WHAT YOU WENT THROUGH WOULD BREAK ANY MAN.
22

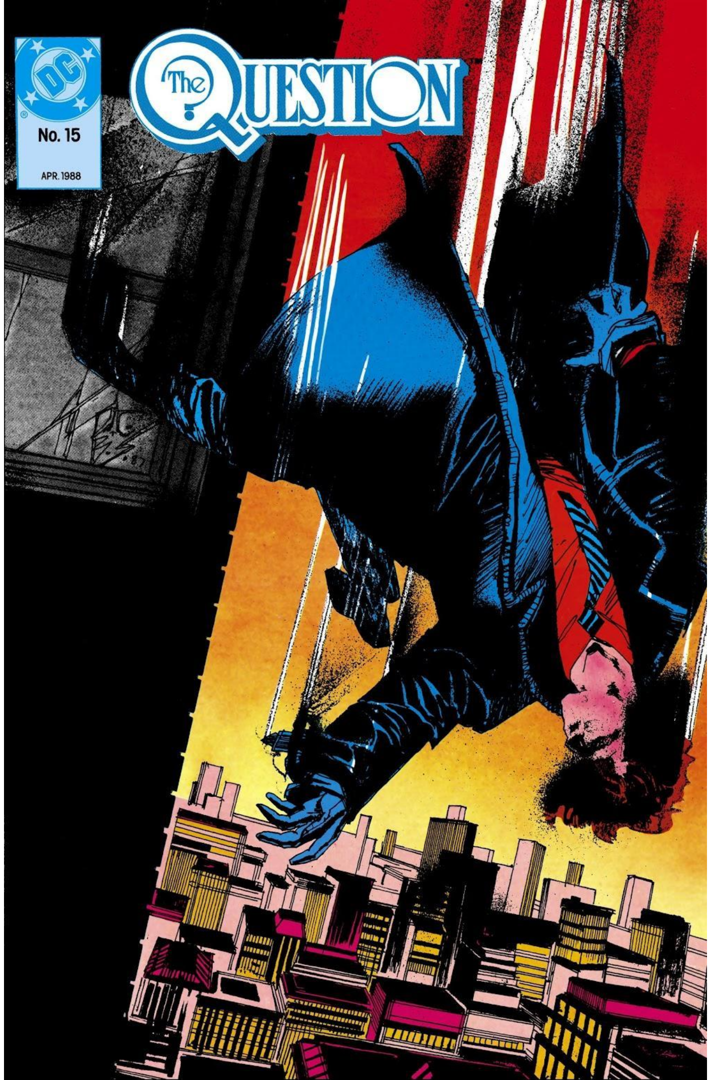

I'M SORRY I HAD TO DISAPPOINT YOU. I KNOW SOME THINGS YOU PROBABLY DON'T. THEY HELPED.
COLONEL?
WAIT A MINUTE...WE HAVE TO THINK ABOUT THIS.
BUT HE WON!
SCREW THAT. WE CAN'T LET 'IM LOOSE. HE KNOWS TOO MUCH...
...KNOWS ABOUT THE WEAPONS YOU BEEN THE LAST TWO DAYS BUYING AND OUR PLANS TO HIT THE MARINE COMMAND AT THE NAVAL BASE...
HE DIDN'T TILL YOU JUST TOLD HIM.
WHILE AGO, I REMEMBERED WHERE I SAW HIM. HE'S SAGE --THAT TEEVEE REPORTER.
WE CAN'T LET A REPORTER GO.
BILLY HAS A POINT.
COLONEL ...HE WON.
I'M WITH BILLY.
I AIN'T SURE...
COLONEL DeBECK, A FEW DAYS AGO I BELIEVE I HEARD YOU SAY THESE GENTLEMEN ARE HONORABLE.
23


I'M TIRED OF TALK.
HOLD IT.
HE WON, BILLY.
WELL.
CAN'T YOU STOP 'EM, SIR?
NO...LET THIS COMBAT DECIDE WHO'S RIGHT.
THAT WAY YOU DON'T HAVE TO.
24

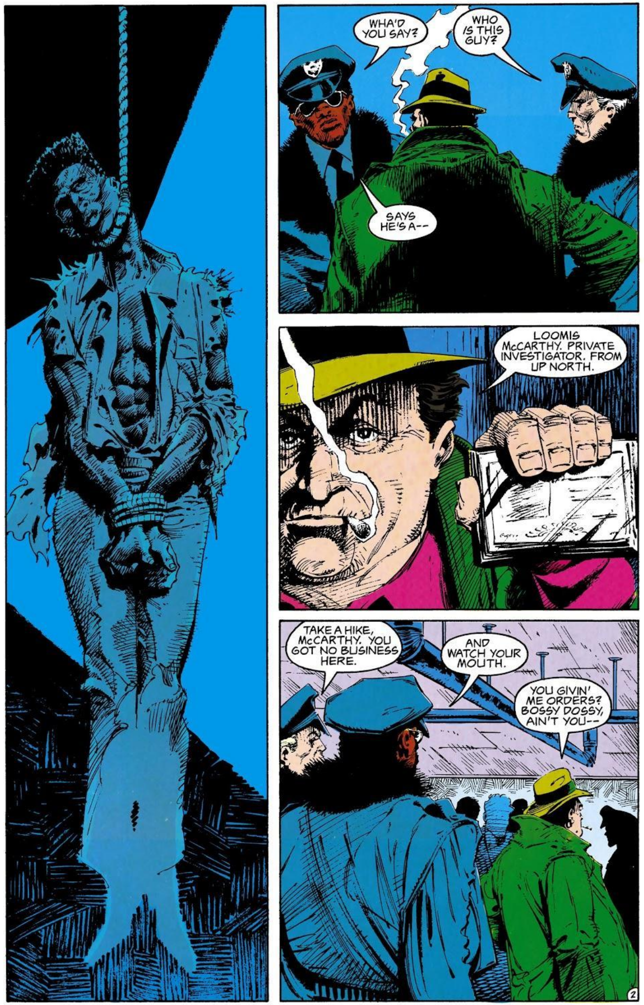

AAAGH
NOW IT'S YOUR TURN.
COLONEL, DAMNIT, WE TRUSTED YOU TO HAVE ANSWERS... TO KNOW...
YOU TAUGHT US...
...ABOUT HONOR...


ANDY... MIKE...
--NO!
I'VE LOST BLOOD... IN BAD SHAPE... BUT I'LL DO THE BEST I CAN...
THANKS.
SOMETHING SHAKESPEARE WROTE... "WHAT IS HONOR? A WORD. WHO HATH IT?"
"HE THAT DIED O' WEDNESDAY."



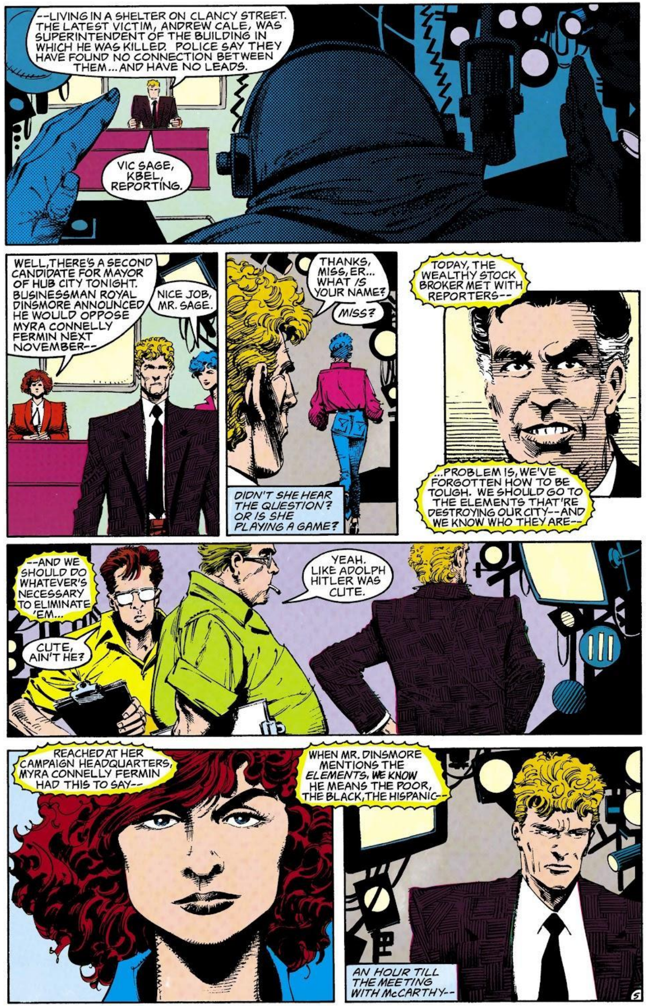
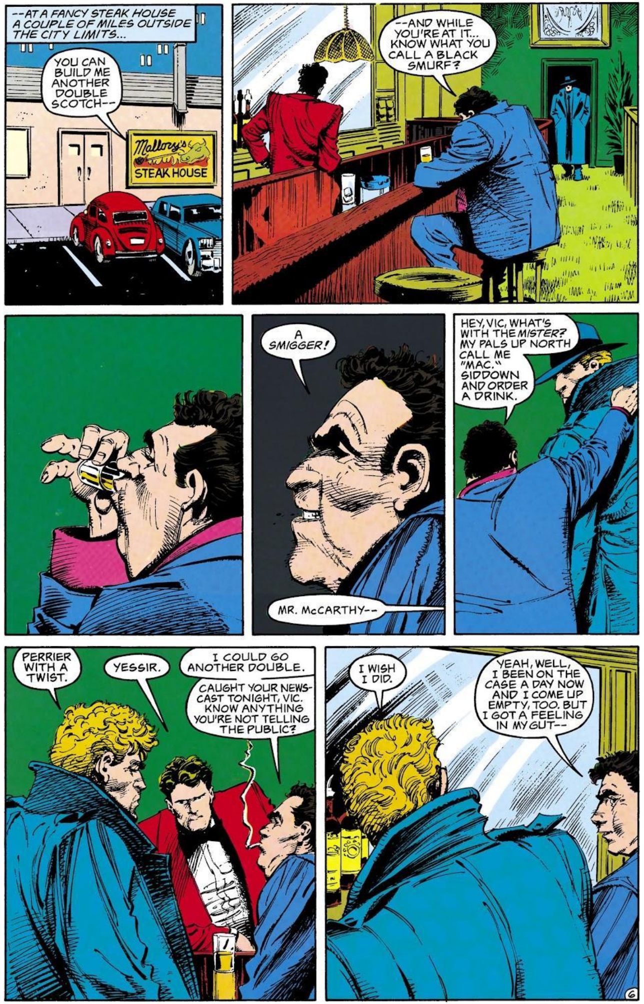

DC
The QUESTION
No. 15
APR. 1988

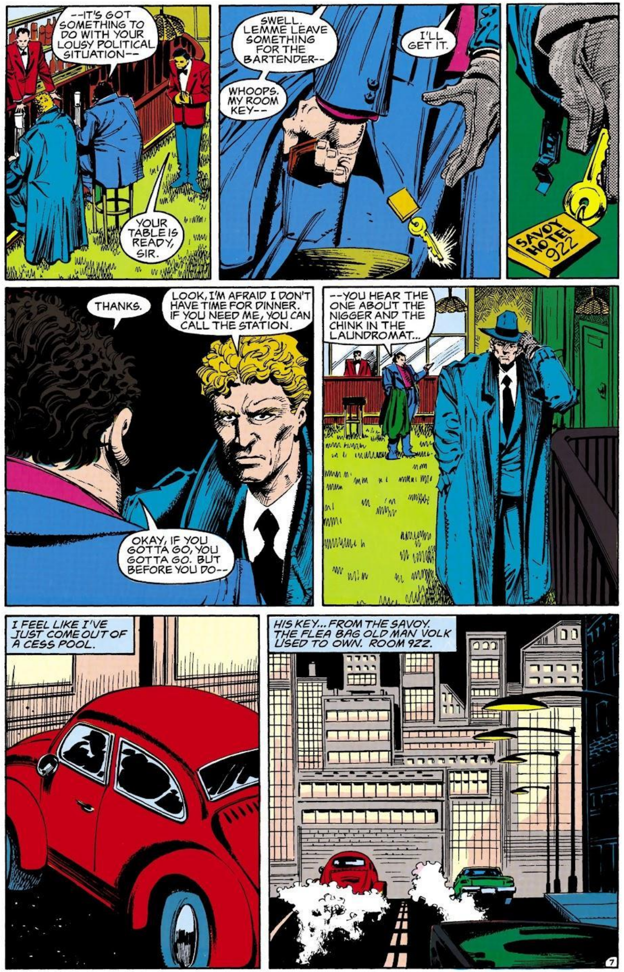

EPITAPH FOR A HERO
HEY, THE JIG IS UP.
STORY DENNIS O'NEIL
ART DENYS COWAN & RICK MAGYAR
LETTERING STEVE HAYNIE
COLORING TATJANA WOOD
EDITING MIKE GOLD

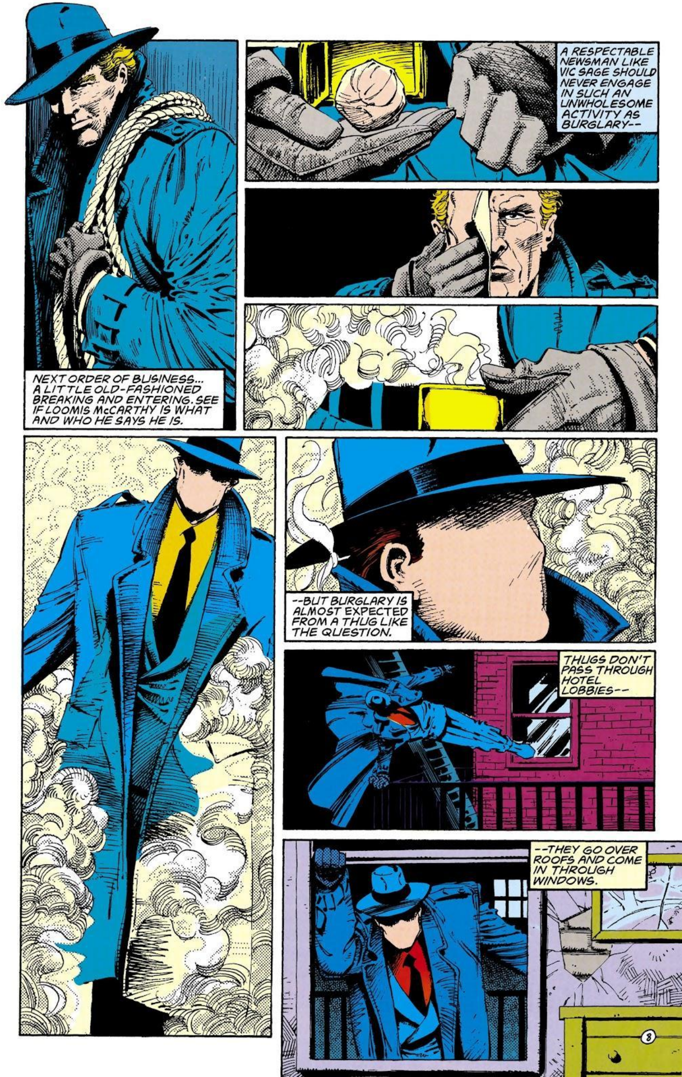

WHA'D YOU SAY?
WHO IS THIS GUY?
SAYS HE'S A--
LOOMIS McCARTHY. PRIVATE INVESTIGATOR. FROM UP NORTH.
TAKE A HIKE, McCARTHY. YOU GOT NO BUSINESS HERE.
AND WATCH YOUR MOUTH.
YOU GIVIN' ME ORDERS? BOSSY DOSSY, AIN'T YOU--
2


--BOSSY NIGGER DOSSY.
YOU SON OF A BITCH--
EASY, LOU.
GET A QUICK SHOT OF THE OUTSIDE OF THE BUILDING. WE'VE GOT ONLY TWO HOURS BEFORE THE SIX O'CLOCK NEWS--
I HEAR YA, VIC.
VIC SAGE?
POLICE LINE-DO NOT CROSS-POLICE L
LOOMIS McCARTHY. FROM UP NORTH. HEY, MAN, YOU DID A GREAT JOB ON THAT DeBECK STORY LAST WEEK.
THANKS.
TALK TO YOU?
IF YOU TALK FAST. I'M ON DEADLINE--
ONLY TAKE A MINUTE, VIC.
THIS MAKES--WHAT?--THE FOURTH DARKIE BEEN STRUNG UP HERE IN HUB CITY IN A MONTH?
MAKES FOUR GOOD ONES, BUT NEVER MIND THAT, RIGHT?
I BEEN HIRED TO LOOK INTO IT.
WHO'S YOUR CLIENT?
HEY, VIC--YOU KNOW THAT'S PRIVILEGED.
ANYWAY, I KNOW YOU BEEN ON THE CASE AND I FIGURE WE COULD WORK TOGETHER. POOL INFO.
I GUESS IT CAN'T HURT--
3


I KNEW YOU WERE MY KINDA GUY. BUY YOU DINNER AT MALLORY'S? EIGHT O'CLOCK?
SEE YOU THEN.
HEY, VIC, BEFORE YOU GO, I GOT ONE FOR YOU...
...WHADDAYA CALL FIVE HUNNERT DARKIES AT THE BOTTOM OF THE RIVER?
A GOOD START!
NOT FUNNY.
BAD JOKE FROM A CRUMMY MAN. McCARTHY'S A PRIME EXAMPLE OF WHAT MENCKEN CALLED BOOBUS AMERICANUS --BIGOTED, IGNORANT, CRASS.
BUT MAYBE HE CAN SHED SOME LIGHT ON THE--
--MURDERS IN THE LAST THIRTY FOUR DAYS. ALL FOUR VICTIMS WERE BLACK, BUT APART FROM THAT, THEY SEEM TO HAVE NOTHING IN COMMON.
MARCUS AINTREE WAS AN ACCOUNTANT--
--WILLIAM GLOTTER WAS AN ELECTRICIAN--
--AND RUDOLPH CARTER WAS A HOMELESS MAN--
4

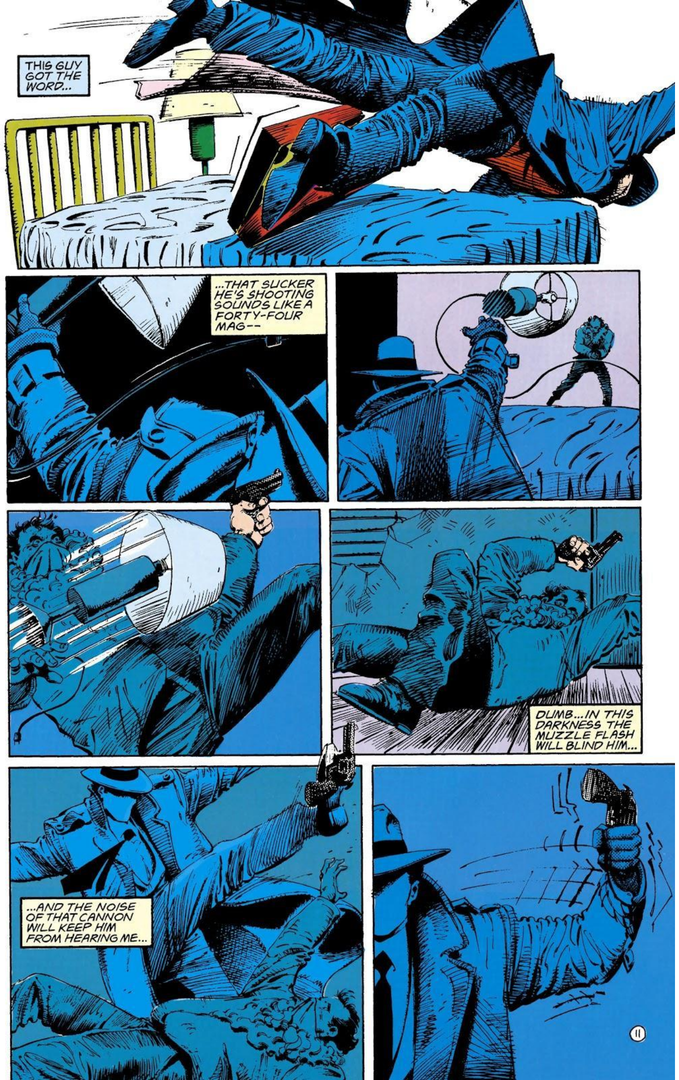

--LIVING IN A SHELTER ON CLANCY STREET. THE LATEST VICTIM, ANDREW CALE, WAS SUPERINTENDENT OF THE BUILDING IN WHICH HE WAS KILLED. POLICE SAY THEY HAVE FOUND NO CONNECTION BETWEEN THEM... AND HAVE NO LEADS.
VIC SAGE, KBEL, REPORTING.
WELL, THERE'S A SECOND CANDIDATE FOR MAYOR OF HUB CITY TONIGHT. BUSINESSMAN ROYAL DINSMORE ANNOUNCED HE WOULD OPPOSE MYRA CONNELLY FERMIN NEXT NOVEMBER--
NICE JOB, MR. SAGE.
THANKS, MISS, ER... WHAT IS YOUR NAME?
MISS?
DIDN'T SHE HEAR THE QUESTION? OR IS SHE PLAYING A GAME?
TODAY, THE WEALTHY STOCK BROKER MET WITH REPORTERS--
...PROBLEM IS, WE'VE FORGOTTEN HOW TO BE TOUGH. WE SHOULD GO TO THE ELEMENTS THAT'RE DESTROYING OUR CITY--AND WE KNOW WHO THEY ARE--
--AND WE SHOULD DO WHATEVER'S NECESSARY TO ELIMINATE 'EM...
CUTE, AIN'T HE?
YEAH. LIKE ADOLPH HITLER WAS CUTE.
REACHED AT HER CAMPAIGN HEADQUARTERS, MYRA CONNELLY FERMIN HAD THIS TO SAY--
WHEN MR. DINSMORE MENTIONS THE ELEMENTS, WE KNOW HE MEANS THE POOR, THE BLACK, THE HISPANIC--
AN HOUR TILL THE MEETING WITH McCARTHY--
5

--AT A FANCY STEAK HOUSE A COUPLE OF MILES OUTSIDE THE CITY LIMITS...
YOU CAN BUILD ME ANOTHER DOUBLE SCOTCH--
Mallory's STEAK HOUSE
--AND WHILE YOU'RE AT IT... KNOW WHAT YOU CALL A BLACK SMURF?
A SMIGGER!
MR. McCARTHY--
HEY, VIC, WHAT'S WITH THE MISTER? MY PALS UP NORTH CALL ME "MAC." SIDDOWN AND ORDER A DRINK.
PERRIER WITH A TWIST.
YESSIR.
I COULD GO ANOTHER DOUBLE.
CAUGHT YOUR NEWSCAST TONIGHT, VIC. KNOW ANYTHING YOU'RE NOT TELLING THE PUBLIC?
I WISH I DID.
YEAH, WELL, I BEEN ON THE CASE A DAY NOW AND I COME UP EMPTY, TOO. BUT I GOT A FEELING IN MY GUT--
6


--IT'S GOT SOMETHING TO DO WITH YOUR LOUSY POLITICAL SITUATION--
YOUR TABLE IS READY, SIR.
SWELL. LEMME LEAVE SOMETHING FOR THE BARTENDER--
WHOOPS. MY ROOM KEY--
I'LL GET IT.
SAVOY HOTEL 922
THANKS.
LOOK, I'M AFRAID I DON'T HAVE TIME FOR DINNER. IF YOU NEED ME, YOU CAN CALL THE STATION.
OKAY, IF YOU GOTTA GO, YOU GOTTA GO. BUT BEFORE YOU DO--
--YOU HEAR THE ONE ABOUT THE NIGGER AND THE CHINK IN THE LAUNDROMAT...
I FEEL LIKE I'VE JUST COME OUT OF A CESS POOL.
HIS KEY... FROM THE SAVOY. THE FLEA BAG OLD MAN VOLK USED TO OWN. ROOM 922.
7


NEXT ORDER OF BUSINESS... A LITTLE OLD-FASHIONED BREAKING AND ENTERING. SEE IF LOOMIS McCARTHY IS WHAT AND WHO HE SAYS HE IS.
A RESPECTABLE NEWSMAN LIKE VIC SAGE SHOULD NEVER ENGAGE IN SUCH AN UNWHOLESOME ACTIVITY AS BURGLARY--
--BUT BURGLARY IS ALMOST EXPECTED FROM A THUG LIKE THE QUESTION.
THUGS DON'T PASS THROUGH HOTEL LOBBIES--
--THEY GO OVER ROOFS AND COME IN THROUGH WINDOWS.
8

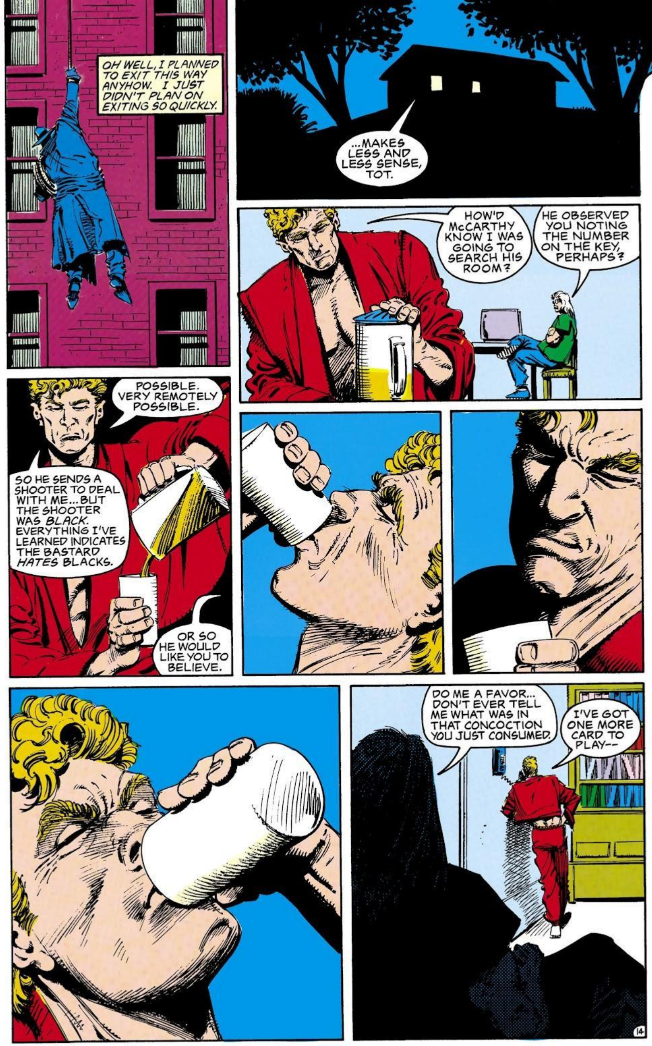

NO DANGER OF MY BEING HEARD...WITH THAT PARTY NEXT DOOR, THE YUGO-SLAVIAN ARMY COULD MARCH THROUGH HERE PLAYING TUBAS AND NOBODY WOULD NOTICE...
LET'S HAVE A LOOK AT WHAT BROTHER McCARTHY LIKES TO READ...
AH. HERE'S A WONDERFUL PUBLICATION...DEDICATED TO THE PROPOSITION--
TRUE AMERICANISM
--THAT THE LACK OF WHITE SKIN, SHORT HAIR AND AN ANGLO-SAXON SURNAME IS REASON FOR IMMEDIATE EXTERMINATION.
WHAT ELSE?
RACIST POLEMICS AND THE SLEAZIEST KIND OF PORN... GARBAGE THAT GIVES THE GUTTER A BAD NAME...
BROADS IN BONDAGE
BROADS IN BONDAGE


CHECK THE SUITCASE.
BOX OF FORTY-FIVE CALIBER SHELLS-- HE MUST NOT HAVE GOTTEN THE WORD THAT THESE DAYS THE MACHO GUYS USE MAGNUMS -- AND AN ADDRESS BOOK--
MAYBE SOMETHING IN THIS...YEAH, BINGO.
CALEB PHILLIPS IS THE LEADER OF A BUNCH OF GUYS WHO GET THEIR KICKS WEARING WHITE SHEETS AND BURNING CROSSES...

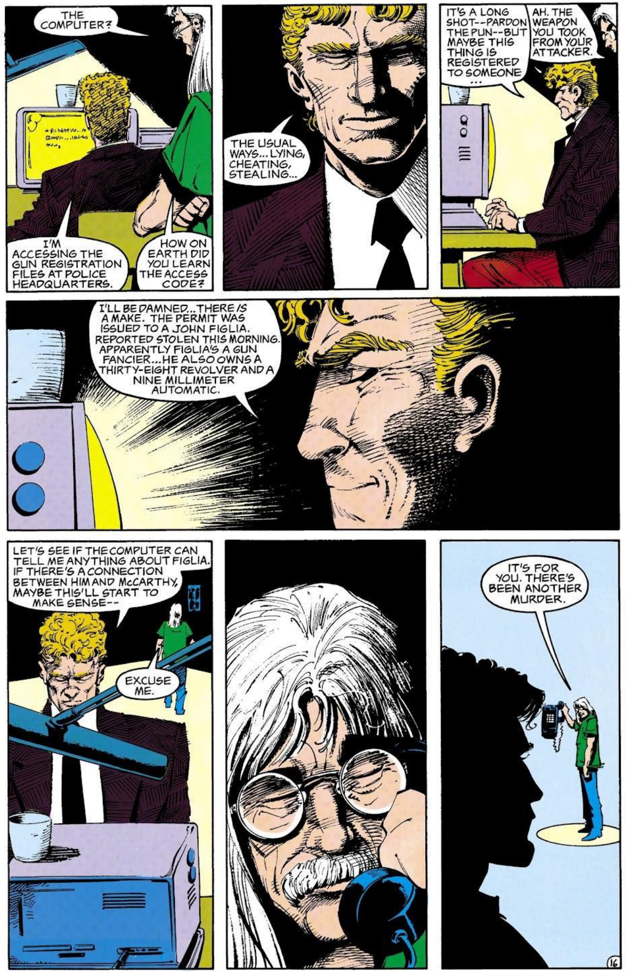

THIS GUY GOT THE WORD...
...THAT SUCKER HE'S SHOOTING SOUNDS LIKE A FORTY-FOUR MAG--
DUMB...IN THIS DARKNESS THE MUZZLE FLASH WILL BLIND HIM...
...AND THE NOISE OF THAT CANNON WILL KEEP HIM FROM HEARING ME...

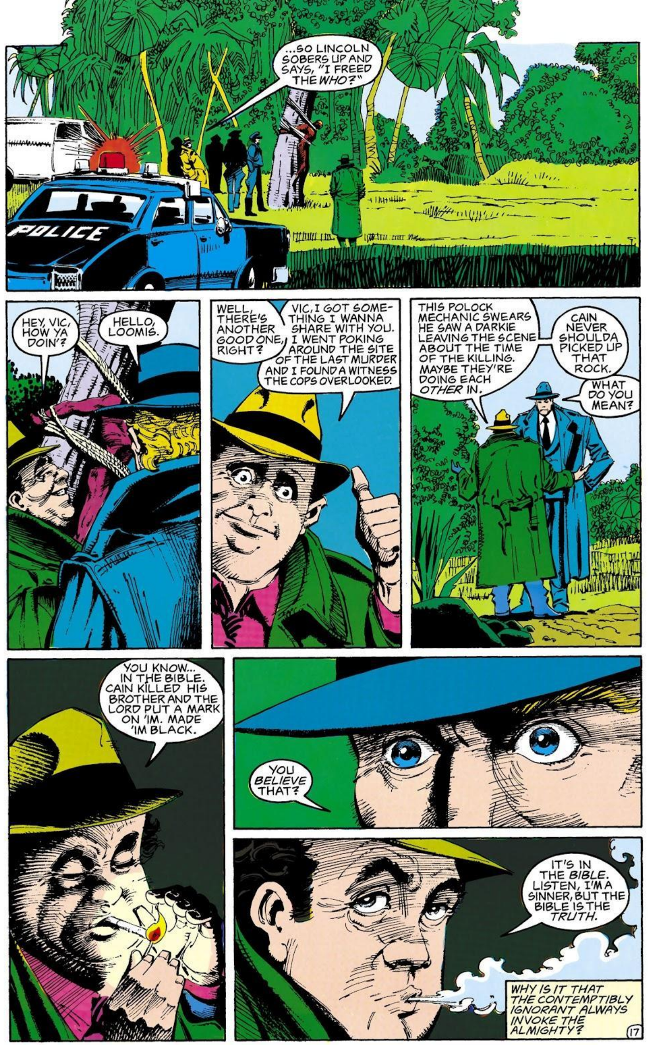

OKAY, BRIGHT EYES, LET'S SEE WHAT TREASURES THAT KERCHIEF CONCEALS.
I WAS HOPING YOUR FACE WOULD ANSWER ALL MY QUESTIONS. BUT IT'S JUST A FACE.
UGLY FACE. WISH I'D LEFT THE BANDANA ON.
I GOT 'IM!
DAMN...THE SHOTS DEAFENED ME, TOO.
THEY THINK I'M THE BAD GUY...GOOD, GUTSY PEOPLE WILLING TO HELP A STRANGER IN TROUBLE WHEN THEY HEAR A SPOT OF GUNFIRE.
WORLD NEEDS MORE LIKE 'EM--


THAT'S WHY I'LL TRY--
--NOT TO BRUISE ANYONE--
--ON MY WAY--
--OUT!
HE MUSTA FALLEN.
SHISH... IT'S NINE FLOORS STRAIGHT DOWN.
BE PICKIN' 'IM UP WITH A BLOTTER.
SERVES 'IM RIGHT.
13


OH WELL, I PLANNED TO EXIT THIS WAY ANYHOW. I JUST DIDN'T PLAN ON EXITING SO QUICKLY.
...MAKES LESS AND LESS SENSE, TOT.
HOW'D McCARTHY KNOW I WAS GOING TO SEARCH HIS ROOM?
HE OBSERVED YOU NOTING THE NUMBER ON THE KEY, PERHAPS?
POSSIBLE. VERY REMOTELY POSSIBLE.
SO HE SENDS A SHOOTER TO DEAL WITH ME... BUT THE SHOOTER WAS BLACK. EVERYTHING I'VE LEARNED INDICATES THE BASTARD HATES BLACKS.
OR SO HE WOULD LIKE YOU TO BELIEVE.
DO ME A FAVOR... DON'T EVER TELL ME WHAT WAS IN THAT CONCOCTION YOU JUST CONSUMED.
I'VE GOT ONE MORE CARD TO PLAY--
14


H'LO. MISTER PHILIPS? THIS'S McCARTHY.
YEAH, BAD CONNECTION.
NAW, NOTHIN' TO REPORT.
AND THAT ANSWERS THAT. McCARTHY IS WORKING FOR THE KLAN.
YOUR CONCLUSION?
IT CAN'T BE A COINCIDENCE... A FOURTEEN KARAT BIGOT LIKE McCARTHY SHOWING UP IN THE WAKE OF THE LYNCHINGS. THERE MUST BE A CONNECTION.
AND YOU WON'T BE ABLE TO REST--YOU WON'T EVEN BE ABLE TO EAT-- UNTIL YOU LEARN WHAT IT IS.
YOURS IS A UNIQUE CURSE, MY FRIEND. I DON'T ENVY YOU.
YOU DON'T HAVE TO.
15

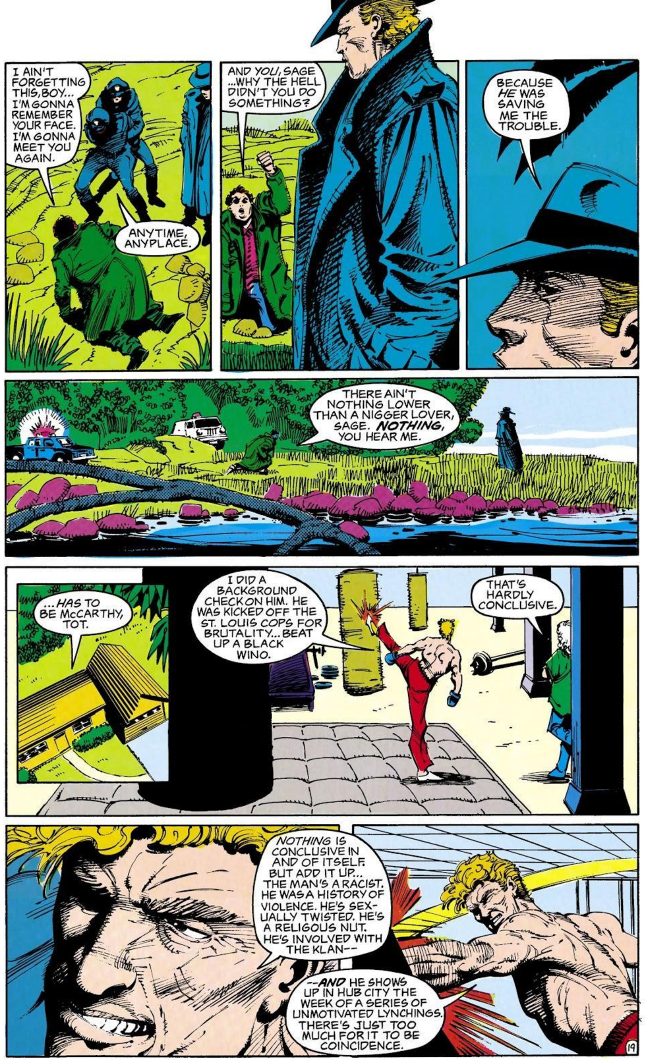

THE COMPUTER?
I'M ACCESSING THE GUN REGISTRATION FILES AT POLICE HEADQUARTERS.
HOW ON EARTH DID YOU LEARN THE ACCESS CODE?
THE USUAL WAYS... LYING, CHEATING, STEALING...
IT'S A LONG SHOT--PARDON THE PUN--BUT MAYBE THIS THING IS REGISTERED TO SOMEONE ...
AH. THE WEAPON YOU TOOK FROM YOUR ATTACKER.
I'LL BE DAMNED... THERE IS A MAKE. THE PERMIT WAS ISSUED TO A JOHN FIGLIA. REPORTED STOLEN THIS MORNING. APPARENTLY FIGLIA'S A GUN FANCIER... HE ALSO OWNS A THIRTY-EIGHT REVOLVER AND A NINE MILLIMETER AUTOMATIC.
LET'S SEE IF THE COMPUTER CAN TELL ME ANYTHING ABOUT FIGLIA. IF THERE'S A CONNECTION BETWEEN HIM AND McCARTHY, MAYBE THIS'LL START TO MAKE SENSE--
EXCUSE ME.
IT'S FOR YOU. THERE'S BEEN ANOTHER MURDER.
16

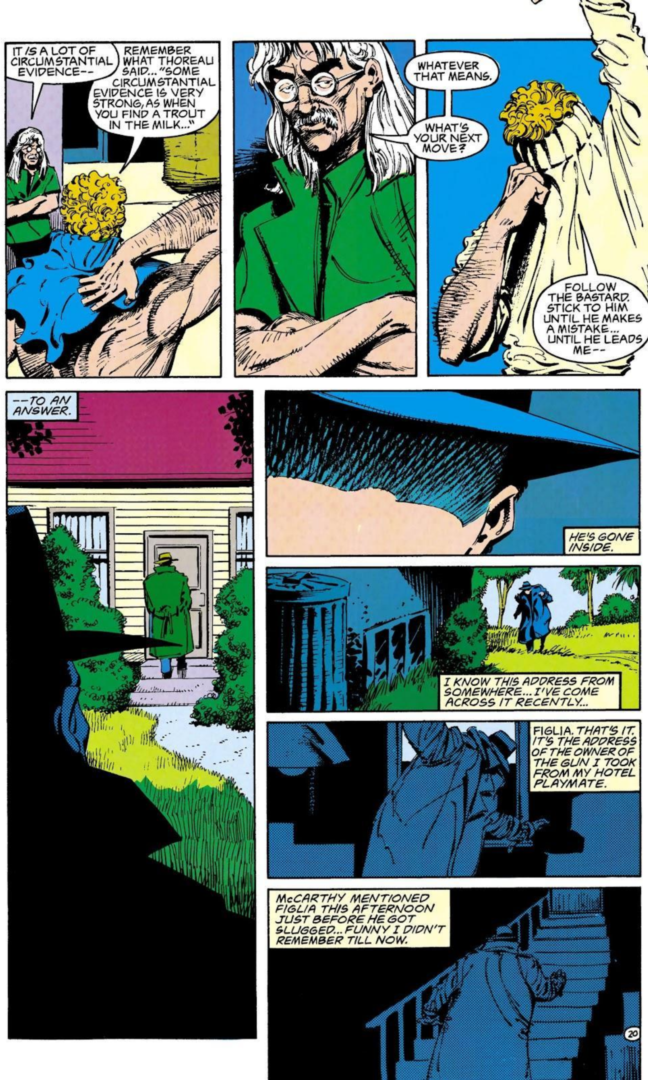


...SO LINCOLN SOBERS UP AND SAYS, "I FREED THE *WHO?*"
HEY, VIC, HOW YA DOIN'?
HELLO, LOOMIS.
WELL, THERE'S ANOTHER GOOD ONE, RIGHT?
VIC, I GOT SOMETHING I WANNA SHARE WITH YOU. I WENT POKING AROUND THE SITE OF THE LAST MURDER AND I FOUND A WITNESS THE COPS OVERLOOKED.
THIS POLOCK MECHANIC SWEARS HE SAW A DARKIE LEAVING THE SCENE ABOUT THE TIME OF THE KILLING. MAYBE THEY'RE DOING EACH *OTHER* IN.
CAIN NEVER SHOULDA PICKED UP THAT ROCK.
WHAT *DO* YOU MEAN?
YOU KNOW... IN THE BIBLE, CAIN KILLED HIS BROTHER AND THE LORD PUT A MARK ON 'IM. MADE 'IM BLACK.
YOU *BELIEVE* THAT?
IT'S IN THE *BIBLE*. LISTEN, I'M A SINNER, BUT THE BIBLE IS THE *TRUTH*.
WHY IS IT THAT THE CONTEMPTIBLY IGNORANT ALWAYS INVOKE THE ALMIGHTY?
17



ANYWAY, BACK TO THE CASE, THE POLITICAL ANGLE... I DUG UP SOMETHING ON A WOP NAMED JACKIE FIGLIA...
THAT REMINDS ME...
...KNOW WHY THE WOPS LIKE THE NIGGERS?
GIVES 'EM SOMEBODY TO BE SMARTER THAN.
LOU... COOL IT!


I AIN'T FORGETTING THIS, BOY... I'M GONNA REMEMBER YOUR FACE. I'M GONNA MEET YOU AGAIN.
ANYTIME, ANYPLACE.
AND YOU, SAGE ...WHY THE HELL DIDN'T YOU DO SOMETHING?
BECAUSE HE WAS SAVING ME THE TROUBLE.
THERE AIN'T NOTHING LOWER THAN A NIGGER LOVER, SAGE. NOTHING, YOU HEAR ME.
...HAS TO BE McCARTHY, TOT.
I DID A BACKGROUND CHECK ON HIM. HE WAS KICKED OFF THE ST. LOUIS COPS FOR BRUTALITY... BEAT UP A BLACK WINO.
THAT'S HARDLY CONCLUSIVE.
NOTHING IS CONCLUSIVE IN AND OF ITSELF. BUT ADD IT UP... THE MAN'S A RACIST. HE WAS A HISTORY OF VIOLENCE. HE'S SEXUALLY TWISTED. HE'S A RELIGOUS NUT. HE'S INVOLVED WITH THE KLAN--
--AND HE SHOWS UP IN HUB CITY THE WEEK OF A SERIES OF UNMOTIVATED LYNCHINGS. THERE'S JUST TOO MUCH FOR IT TO BE COINCIDENCE.
19


IT IS A LOT OF CIRCUMSTANTIAL EVIDENCE--
REMEMBER WHAT THOREAU SAID... "SOME CIRCUMSTANTIAL EVIDENCE IS VERY STRONG, AS WHEN YOU FIND A TROUT IN THE MILK..."
WHATEVER THAT MEANS.
WHAT'S YOUR NEXT MOVE?
FOLLOW THE BASTARD. STICK TO HIM UNTIL HE MAKES A MISTAKE... UNTIL HE LEADS ME--
--TO AN ANSWER.
HE'S GONE INSIDE.
I KNOW THIS ADDRESS FROM SOMEWHERE... I'VE COME ACROSS IT RECENTLY...
FIGLIA. THAT'S IT. IT'S THE ADDRESS OF THE OWNER OF THE GUN I TOOK FROM MY HOTEL PLAYMATE.
McCARTHY MENTIONED FIGLIA THIS AFTERNOON JUST BEFORE HE GOT SLUGGED... FUNNY I DIDN'T REMEMBER TILL NOW.
20


VOICES--
...MY BUDDY PHILIPS HEARD ABOUT THE DARKIES BEING STRUNG UP--
--AND HIRED ME TO CHECK INTO IT... SEE IF IT HAD ANYTHING TO DO WITH HIS GROUP.
DOES IT?
YOU KNOW BETTER'N THAT, MR. FIGLIA... 'CAUSE YOU WERE BEHIND THOSE NECKTIE PARTIES. I LOOKED INTO YOU, FOUND OUT YOU HATE DINSMORE, WHO'S RUNNING FOR MAYOR.
HE WAS YOUR PARTNER. YOU CLAIM HE CHEATED YOU OUTTA THE BUSINESS--
HE *DID*. HE *STOLE* IT.
NOT ACCORDING TO THE COURT. ANYWAY, DINSMORE AIN'T EXACTLY A FRIEND OF THE DARKIES. I FIGURE SOONER OR LATER YOU'LL SPRING SOME EVIDENCE LINKING HIM TO THE HANGINGS.
END HIS POLITICAL CAREER AND MAYBE GET 'IM LOCKED UP.
VERY CLEVER, MR. McCARTHY. OF COURSE, YOU HAVE NO PROOF.
HELL, I AIN'T GONNA SNITCH ON YOU. I *LIKE* WHAT YOU DID. NICE WORK, FOR A WOPPO. ANYWAY, ALL MY JOB WAS WAS TO FIND OUT IF YOU'RE WITH PHILIPS' BUNCH. YOU AIN'T, SO I'M OUT OF IT.
21


IF YOU'RE EVER UP NORTH, GIMME CALL. I'LL BUY THE DRINKS.
BERNARD?
GRUNTS. SCUFFLING. WHAT'S GOING ON?
BERNARD, HE'S GOT A...

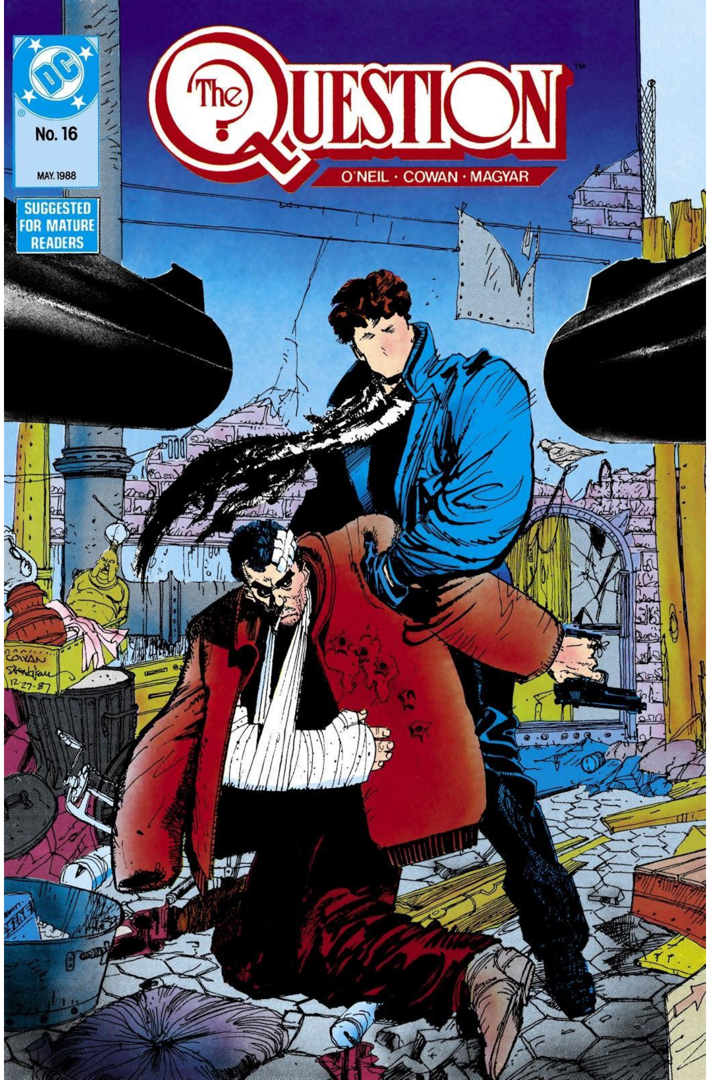

TOO LATE.
HE'S DEAD?
MAYBE NOT. I SHOT 'IM THROUGH THE HEAD AND EVERYBODY KNOWS THAT'S NOT WHERE THEIR BRAINS ARE AT.
NO REMORSE? NO REGRET?
FOR KILLIN' A NIGGER? YOU'RE KIDDIN', RIGHT?
HEY, WHAT'S WITH THE NO-FACE?
I GOT IT. YOUR ONE'A CAL PHILLIPS' BOYS. HE SENT YOU TO GIMME A HAND.
WELL, YOU TELL CAL THAT THE DAY OL' LOOM McCARTHY NEEDS HELP WITH A DARKIE AND A WOP--
--IS THE DAY I PUT SHOE POLISH ON MY MUG AND SING "MAMMY."
23


...ACTING ON LEADS PROVIDED BY McCARTHY, THIS REPORTER WAS ABLE TO ESTABLISH A LINK BETWEEN THE SUSPECTED KILLER, BERNARD HAVINS--
--AND JACK FIGLIA. I LEARNED THAT THEY WERE FELLOW PATIENTS AT A STATE MENTAL HOSPITAL EIGHT YEARS AGO. POLICE SUSPECT THAT--
--FIGLIA INDUCED HAVINS TO ACTUALLY COMMIT THE MURDERS AS PART OF THE SCHEME TO FRAME ROYAL DINSMORE--
THE BASTARD.
--WITH REVENGE AS THE PROBABLE MOTIVE. AT ONE POINT, FIGLIA APPARENTLY LEARNED OF McCARTHY'S INVESTIGATION AND SENT HAVINS TO McCARTHY'S HOTEL ROOM--
HE'S GONNA DIE.
...TONIGHT POLICE ARE STILL SEARCHING FOR FIGLIA.
VIC SAGE, KBEL, REPORTING.
GOOD OF YOU TO GIVE CREDIT TO THE PRIVATE EYE.
I DON'T WANT TO OWE HIM ANYTHING.
NICE JOB, MR. SAGE.
HEY, VIC--
DEPRESSING JOB. NO GOOD GUYS IN THIS ONE... JUST SICKIES AND VICTIMS...
24


FORGET WHAT I CALLED YOU YESTERDAY, OKAY? I UNDERSTAND WHY YOU DIDN'T STEP IN... YOU FIGURED I DIDN'T NEED HELP WITH A WATERMELON EATER--
--AND I WOULDN'T'A, EITHER, IF HE HADN'T TAKEN ME BY SURPRISE. 'COURSE THAT'S THE WAY A NIGGER FIGHTS.
ANYWAY, I WANT YOU TO KNOW I STILL LIKE YOU.
I DON'T WANT YOU TO LIKE ME.
BECAUSE I DON'T LIKE YOU.
I DIDN'T HELP YOU BECAUSE I WAS HOPING THE COP'D BEAT YOU SILLY.
I THINK YOU'RE SCUM.
I LOATHE YOU AND EVERYTHING ABOUT YOU--
--AND EVERYTHING YOU STAND FOR--
--AND I HOPE YOU BOIL IN THE DEEPEST PIT OF--
VIC-- WATCH OUT!
LIES!
25


LIES ABOUT ME--
--ON TELEVISION!
CALL AN AMBULANCE!


WHY'D YOU DO, IT, McCARTHY? WHY'D YOU TAKE THOSE SLUGS FOR ME?
ANSWER ME, DAMNIT--
--WHY?
LISTEN, YOU CAN'T GIVE YOUR LIFE FOR ME. NOT YOU. ANYBODY BUT YOU.
HE CAN'T HEAR YOU, VIC. HE'S--
YEAH. DEAD.
HE WAS A REAL HERO.
DON'T YOU CALL HIM THAT! DON'T YOU DARE!
WHY NOT?
I DON'T KNOW... MAYBE BECAUSE THERE ARE NO HEROES--
...AND NO VILLAINS, EITHER. MAYBE THERE IS NOT ONE DAMN VILLAIN IN THE WORLD...
END

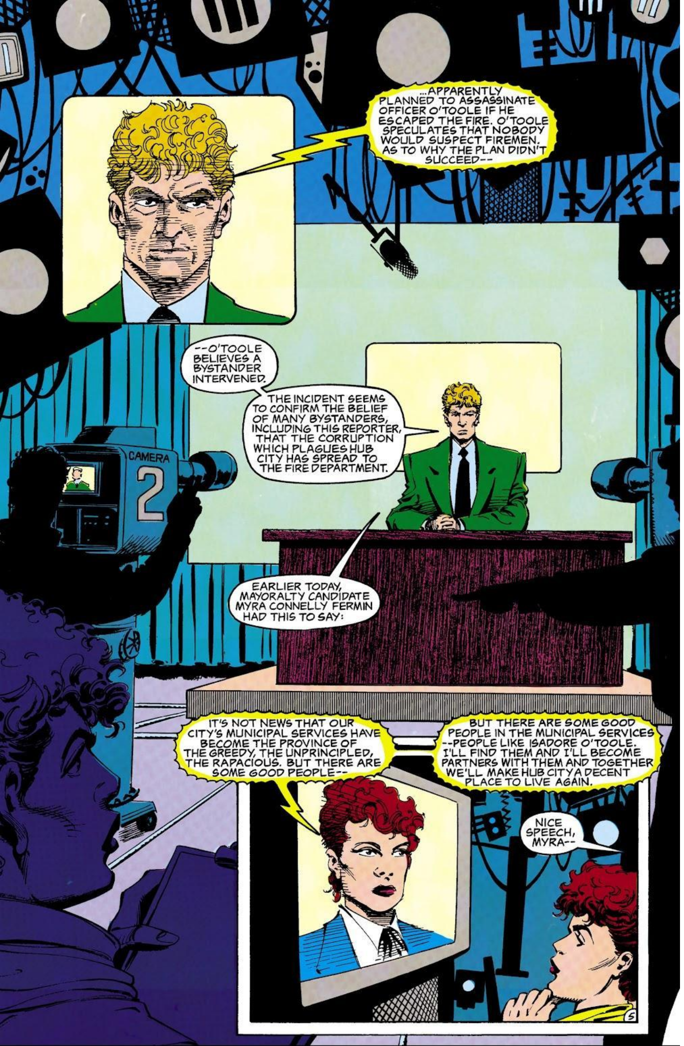

DC
No. 16
MAY. 1988
SUGGESTED FOR MATURE READERS
The QUESTION
O'NEIL · COWAN · MAGYAR

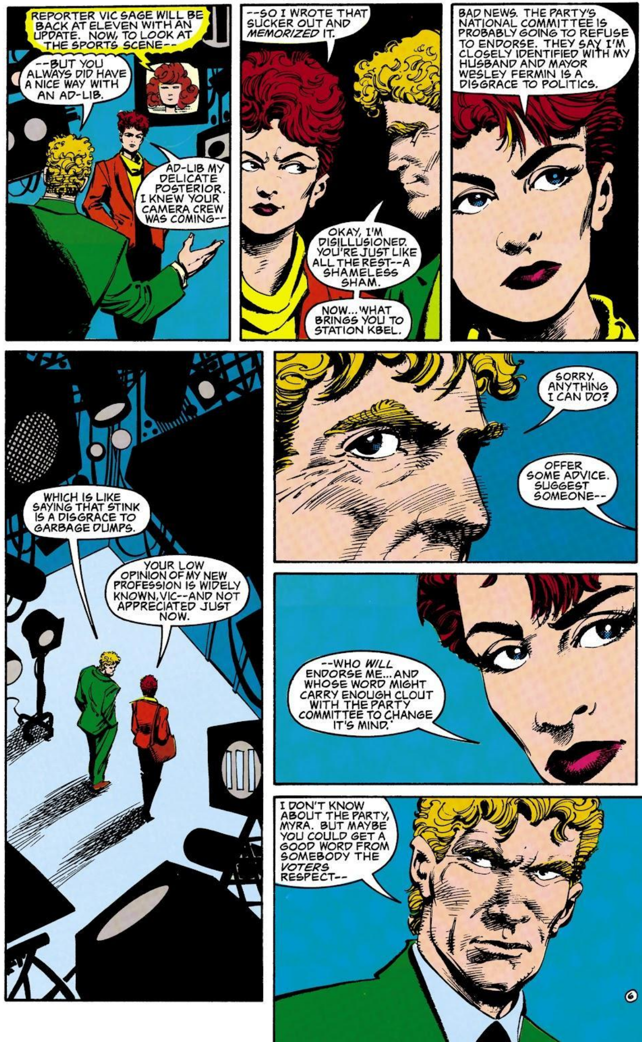



UNNERSTAND MY MEANIN', FILLSTEIN?
KNOW WHAT YOU ARE, IZZY? YER A *TRAITOR*.
YOU USED TO BE ONE'A US.
YEAH. THEN I PASSED MY IQ TEST.
I CATCH YOU TAKIN' DRUG MONEY AGAIN, I PUT YOU IN THE HOSPITAL.
WHADDA YOU BOYS DOIN'? YOU FIGURE A FIRE'LL START IF YOU WAIT LONG ENOUGH?
WE'RE, EHR-- ONNA *DRILL*, LIEUTENANT.
ONE U.S. GALLON
3.785 LITERS
SOLINE
FLAMMABLE


MAS
3


HEY, STU. YOU SEE LOOEY? WUNNER WHAT'S TAKIN' HIM SO--
4

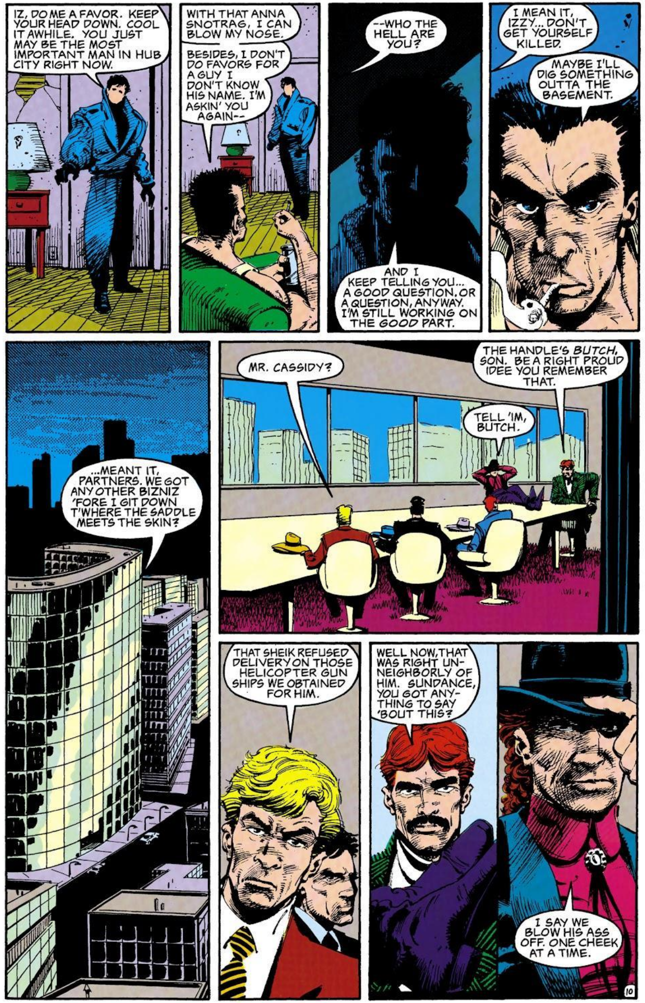

...APPARENTLY PLANNED TO ASSASSINATE OFFICER O'TOOLE IF HE ESCAPED THE FIRE. O'TOOLE SPECULATES THAT NOBODY WOULD SUSPECT FIREMEN. AS TO WHY THE PLAN DIDN'T SUCCEED--
--O'TOOLE BELIEVES A BYSTANDER INTERVENED.
THE INCIDENT SEEMS TO CONFIRM THE BELIEF OF MANY BYSTANDERS, INCLUDING THIS REPORTER, THAT THE CORRUPTION WHICH PLAGUES HUB CITY HAS SPREAD TO THE FIRE DEPARTMENT.
CAMERA 2
EARLIER TODAY, MAYORALTY CANDIDATE MYRA CONNELLY FERMIN HAD THIS TO SAY:
IT'S NOT NEWS THAT OUR CITY'S MUNICIPAL SERVICES HAVE BECOME THE PROVINCE OF THE GREEDY, THE UNPRINCIPLED, THE RAPACIOUS. BUT THERE ARE SOME GOOD PEOPLE--
BUT THERE ARE SOME GOOD PEOPLE IN THE MUNICIPAL SERVICES --PEOPLE LIKE ISADORE O'TOOLE. I'LL FIND THEM AND I'LL BECOME PARTNERS WITH THEM AND TOGETHER WE'LL MAKE HUB CITY A DECENT PLACE TO LIVE AGAIN.
NICE SPEECH, MYRA--
5


REPORTER VIC SAGE WILL BE BACK AT ELEVEN WITH AN UPDATE. NOW, TO LOOK AT THE SPORTS SCENE--
--BUT YOU ALWAYS DID HAVE A NICE WAY WITH AN AD-LIB.
AD-LIB MY DELICATE POSTERIOR. I KNEW YOUR CAMERA CREW WAS COMING--
--SO I WROTE THAT SUCKER OUT AND MEMORIZED IT.
OKAY, I'M DISILLUSIONED. YOU'RE JUST LIKE ALL THE REST--A SHAMELESS SHAM.
NOW... WHAT BRINGS YOU TO STATION KBEL.
BAD NEWS. THE PARTY'S NATIONAL COMMITTEE IS PROBABLY GOING TO REFUSE TO ENDORSE. THEY SAY I'M CLOSELY IDENTIFIED WITH MY HUSBAND AND MAYOR WESLEY FERMIN IS A DISGRACE TO POLITICS.
WHICH IS LIKE SAYING THAT STINK IS A DISGRACE TO GARBAGE DUMPS.
YOUR LOW OPINION OF MY NEW PROFESSION IS WIDELY KNOWN, VIC--AND NOT APPRECIATED JUST NOW.
SORRY. ANYTHING I CAN DO?
OFFER SOME ADVICE. SUGGEST SOMEONE--
--WHO WILL ENDORSE ME... AND WHOSE WORD MIGHT CARRY ENOUGH CLOUT WITH THE PARTY COMMITTEE TO CHANGE IT'S MIND.
I DON'T KNOW ABOUT THE PARTY, MYRA. BUT MAYBE YOU COULD GET A GOOD WORD FROM SOMEBODY THE VOTERS RESPECT--
6

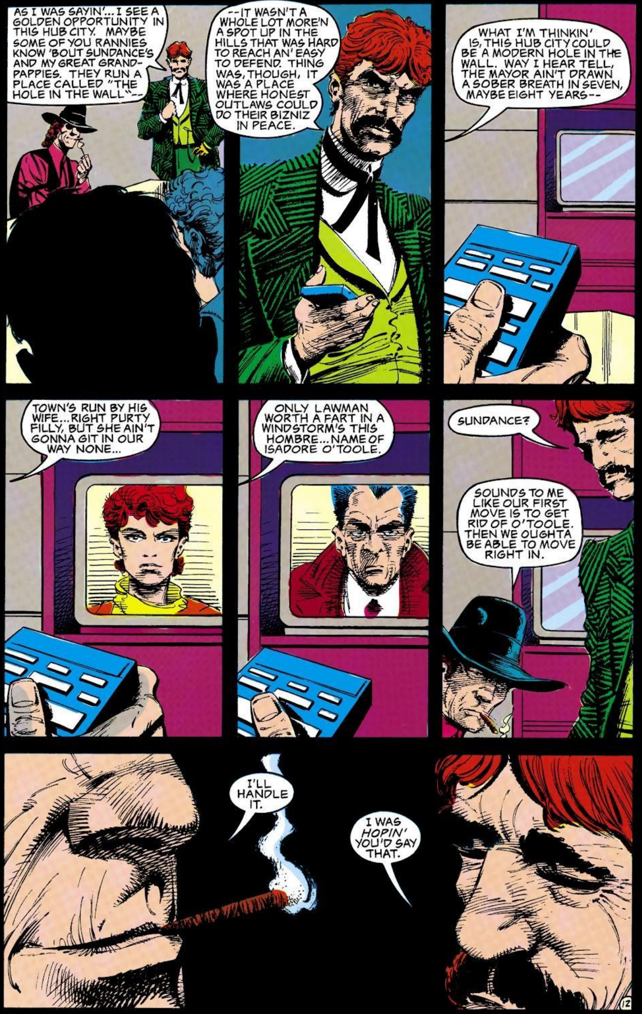

PLANNING TO SHOOT ANYONE IN PARTICULAR, IZZY?
YOU, MAYBE, YOU DUMB SONABITCH.
7

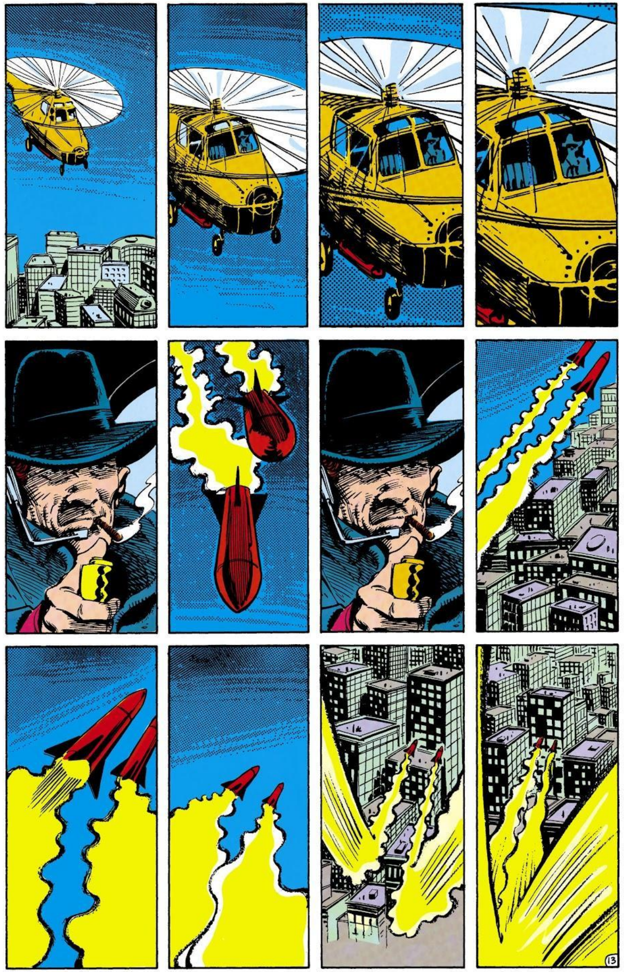

HOW LONG YOU BEEN STANDING THERE?
COUPLE OF MINUTES.
MAKES ME NERVOUS. IF YOU WAS A BAD GUY--
--I'D BE MEAT.
TRUE. BUT IT'S NOT LIKELY ANY BAD GUYS CAN DO WHAT I CAN.
AN' IF THEY CAN.
THEN YOU'RE DEAD.
YOU'RE A BUNDLE--
--OF LAUGHS. LIKE ALWAYS.
WAS IT YOU DONE THE NUMBER ON THE GUYS TRIED TO SNUFF ME LAST NIGHT?
GUILTY, IZZY. I WAS CHECKING UP ON YOU--
8


--AND I STUMBLED ONTO THEIR ACTION. I HAD TO REMONSTRATE WITH THEM.
YEAH. YOU REMONSTRATED TWO BUSTED JAWS ANNA FRACTURED SKULL.
WHAT'RE YOU, ANYWAY, MY GUARDIAN ANGEL?
IF YOU'RE OFFERING THE JOB, I PASS.
IZZY, YOU USED TO BE THE ROTTENEST COP IN THE CITY--
--MAYBE IN THE WORLD. NOW YOU'RE MR. CLEAN? WHY? WAS IT BECAUSE I SAVED YOU FROM GETTING YOUR HEAD BLOWN OFF?
THAT HAD SOMETHING TO DO WITH IT... LIKE IT WAS A TRIGGER, MAYBE. BUT MOSTLY, IT WAS THAT I WAS A BAD COP ALL THEM YEARS AN' IT WAS TIME TO CHANGE.
WHAT ELSE COULD I BE BUT A GOOD COP?
AN ANSWER WORTHY OF THE I CHING ITSELF.
AM I S'POSED TO KNOW WHAT THAT MEANS?
IZZY, WHAT DO YOU THINK OF MYRA CONNELLY?
GREAT LOOKIN' FRAIL... NICE LEGS, NICE BOOBS--
BAG THE DROOLING AND TELL ME WHAT YOU THINK OF HER AS A POSSIBLE MAYOR.
I'D VOTE FOR HER.
9


IZ, DO ME A FAVOR. KEEP YOUR HEAD DOWN. COOL IT AWHILE. YOU JUST MAY BE THE MOST IMPORTANT MAN IN HUB CITY RIGHT NOW.
WITH THAT ANNA SNOTRAG, I CAN BLOW MY NOSE.
BESIDES, I DON'T DO FAVORS FOR A GUY I DON'T KNOW HIS NAME. I'M ASKIN' YOU AGAIN--
--WHO THE HELL ARE YOU?
AND I KEEP TELLING YOU... A GOOD QUESTION. OR A QUESTION, ANYWAY. I'M STILL WORKING ON THE GOOD PART.
I MEAN IT, IZZY... DON'T GET YOURSELF KILLED.
MAYBE I'LL DIG SOMETHING OUTTA THE BASEMENT.
...MEANT IT, PARTNERS. WE GOT ANY OTHER BIZNIZ 'FORE I GIT DOWN T'WHERE THE SADDLE MEETS THE SKIN?
MR. CASSIDY?
THE HANDLE'S BUTCH, SON. BE A RIGHT PROUD IDEE YOU REMEMBER THAT.
TELL 'IM, BUTCH.
THAT SHEIK REFUSED DELIVERY ON THOSE HELICOPTER GUN SHIPS WE OBTAINED FOR HIM.
WELL NOW, THAT WAS RIGHT UN-NEIGHBORLY OF HIM. SUNDANCE, YOU GOT ANY-THING TO SAY 'BOUT THIS?
I SAY WE BLOW HIS ASS OFF. ONE CHEEK AT A TIME.
10


'COURSE, I AGREE, BUT THAT'LL TAKE A MITE OF DOIN', HIM BEIN' THE HEAD OF HIS COUNTRY AN' ALL.
THE TIME'LL COME, BUTCH. THE TIME'LL COME.
THAT IT? WELL, NOW, I GOT ME SOMETHIN' TO SAY. AN IDEE COME TO ME WATCHIN' THE TEE VEE LAST NIGHT. THERE'S THIS TOWN BACK EAST NAME OF HUB CITY...
I HEARD A JOKE ABOUT IT. "HUBBIES DON'T WALK FOR THEIR HEALTH. THEY RUN."
NOT SMART TO INTERRUPT MY PARTNER WHILE HE'S TALKIN'. NOT SMART.
11

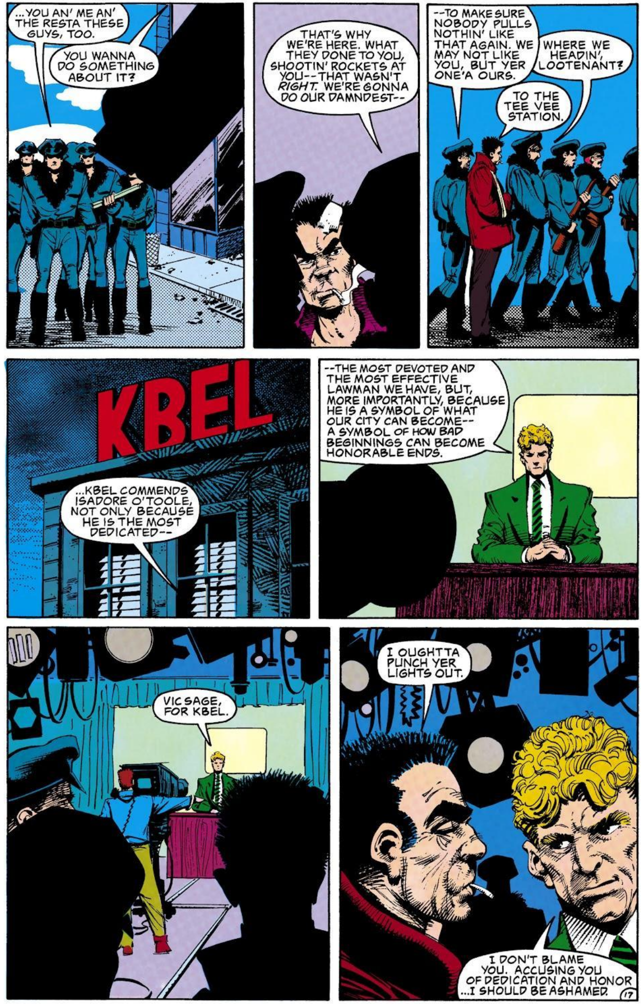

AS I WAS SAYIN'... I SEE A GOLDEN OPPORTUNITY IN THIS HUB CITY. MAYBE SOME OF YOU RANNIES KNOW 'BOUT SUNDANCE'S AND MY GREAT GRAND-PAPPIES. THEY RUN A PLACE CALLED "THE HOLE IN THE WALL"--
--IT WASN'T A WHOLE LOT MORE'N A SPOT UP IN THE HILLS THAT WAS HARD TO REACH AN' EASY TO DEFEND. THING WAS, THOUGH, IT WAS A PLACE WHERE HONEST OUTLAWS COULD DO THEIR BIZNIZ IN PEACE.
WHAT I'M THINKIN' IS, THIS HUB CITY COULD BE A MODERN HOLE IN THE WALL. WAY I HEAR TELL, THE MAYOR AIN'T DRAWN A SOBER BREATH IN SEVEN, MAYBE EIGHT YEARS--
TOWN'S RUN BY HIS WIFE... RIGHT PURTY FILLY, BUT SHE AIN'T GONNA GIT IN OUR WAY NONE...
ONLY LAWMAN WORTH A FART IN A WINDSTORM'S THIS HOMBRE... NAME OF ISADORE O'TOOLE.
SUNDANCE?
SOUNDS TO ME LIKE OUR FIRST MOVE IS TO GET RID OF O'TOOLE. THEN WE OUGHTA BE ABLE TO MOVE RIGHT IN.
I'LL HANDLE IT.
I WAS HOPIN' YOU'D SAY THAT.
12






...LIKE I SAID, PLAIN AN' PURE LOCO, SUNDANCE--
--USIN' A HELICOPTER AN' ROCKETS FOR A SIMPLE BUSHWACKIN'.
YOU AIN'T EXACTLY A MODEL OF MENTAL HEALTH YOURSELF, BUTCH. HELL, YOU'RE CRAZIER'N I AM--
--ONLY THING IS, IT'S A PROFITABLE KINDA CRAZY YOU GOT. 'FORE YOU SAW THAT MOVIE 'BOUT BUTCH AN' SUNDANCE, YOU WERE JUST A SMALL TIME HOOD SUPPLYIN' OTHER SMALLTIMERS WITH PIECES.
NOW, FIVE YEARS AFTER YOU SAW THE MOVIE, WE'RE THE BIGGEST GUNRUNNERS IN THE COUNTRY...MAYBE THE WORLD. THAT MOVIE WAS PURE GOLD, MAN.
IT WASN'T ONLY THE MOVIE--
OH, YEAH. YOUR GREAT GRANDPAP WAS THE ORIGINAL BUTCH--MAYBE.
AIN'T NO MAYBE 'BOUT IT, SUNDANCE.
I DON'T CARE ONE WAY OR THE OTHER. I DON'T EVEN MIND BEIN' CALLED--
--SUNDANCE, LONG'S THE MONEY KEEPS COMIN' IN.
15


SEEMS TO ME WE LOST THE POINT OF THIS TALK BACK ALONG THE TRAIL SOMEWHERES.
RIGHT. O'TOOLE SURVIVED. SO I'LL GO KILL 'IM PERSONALLY.
SUNDANCE...YOU THINK YOU'RE REALLY INSANE?
BUTCH, I NEVER DENIED THE MARINE CORPS' CHARGES THAT I CELEBRATED THE FOURTH OF JULY BY BLOWING UP AN AMMO DUMP--
--I JUST SAID I DIDN'T UNDERSTAND WHY THEY WERE SO UPSET.
THAT YOUR ANSWER?
HOSPITA
EMERGE
EMERGENCY ROOM
...ANSWER ME, LIEUTENANT O'TOOLE--
--WHY ARE YOU LEAVING THE HOSPITAL AGAINST DOCTOR'S ORDERS?
'CAUSE I GOT A PLACE TO BE.
DON'T STAND THERE SHOWIN' OFF YER TONSILS...HELP ME ON WITH THIS THING.
YOU MEN ARE ALL ALIKE.
HOW WOULD YOU KNOW?
LIEUTENANT, THERE'S A SERGEANT FILLSTEIN WAITING FOR YOU...
EMERGENC ROOM
YEAH, WELL... I'M READY FOR 'IM.
IZZY, YOU AN' ME HAD OUR DIFFERENCES...
16



...YOU AN' ME AN' THE RESTA THESE GUYS, TOO.
YOU WANNA DO SOMETHING ABOUT IT?
THAT'S WHY WE'RE HERE. WHAT THEY DONE TO YOU, SHOOTIN' ROCKETS AT YOU--THAT WASN'T RIGHT. WE'RE GONNA DO OUR DAMNDEST--
--TO MAKE SURE NOBODY PULLS NOTHIN' LIKE THAT AGAIN. WE MAY NOT LIKE YOU, BUT YER ONE'A OURS.
WHERE WE HEADIN', LOOTENANT?
TO THE TEE VEE STATION.
KBEL
...KBEL COMMENDS ISADORE O'TOOLE, NOT ONLY BECAUSE HE IS THE MOST DEDICATED--
--THE MOST EFFECTIVE AND THE MOST DEVOTED LAWMAN WE HAVE, BUT, MORE IMPORTANTLY, BECAUSE HE IS A SYMBOL OF WHAT OUR CITY CAN BECOME-- A SYMBOL OF HOW BAD BEGINNINGS CAN BECOME HONORABLE ENDS.
VIC SAGE, FOR KBEL.
I OUGHTTA PUNCH YER LIGHTS OUT.
I DON'T BLAME YOU. ACCUSING YOU OF DEDICATION AND HONOR ...I SHOULD BE ASHAMED.
17



YOU MAKE ME SOUND LIKE SOME KINDA ...HERO OR SOMETHIN'. I AIN'T. I'M JUST A GUY DOIN' WHAT HE'S GOTTA.
THE REST IS BULL.
OFFICER, WE'RE READY FOR YOU.
SEE THE RED LIGHT? WHEN IT GOES ON, JUST LOOK AT THE CAMERA AND SAY YOUR PIECE.
YEAH.
WE'RE TAPING.
I'LL MAKE THIS SHORT AN' SWEET.
THEY ASKED ME TO SAY SOMETHIN' ABOUT THIS MYRA FERMIN LADY THAT'S RUNNIN' FOR MAYOR. WELL, HERE IT IS--
--SHE'S STRAIGHT. SHE'S OKAY. I'M VOTIN' FOR HER.
THAT IT?
THAT'S IT, LIEUTENANT.
IZZY, THERE'S A WORD FOR WHAT YOU JUST DID.
18

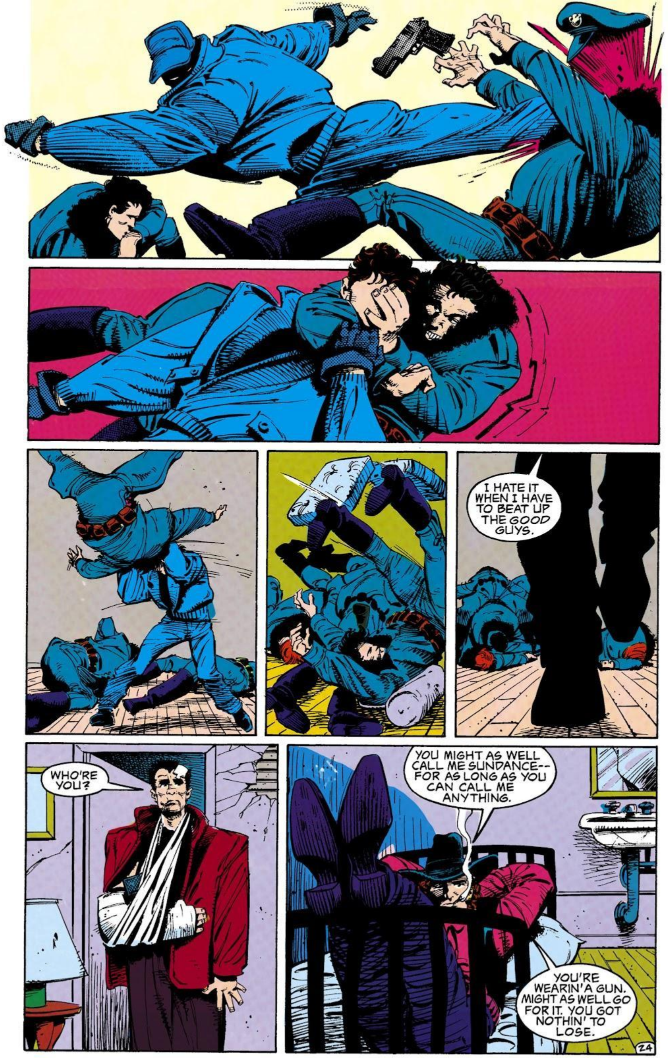

THE WORD IS "ELOQUENT."
HE'S SOMETHING ELSE.
ANY LEADS ON WHO BOMBED HIS BUILDING?
NOT YET. BUT THERE'S SOMEONE I'M GOING TO--
--QUESTION.
...COMIN' BACKKA MY ROOM WIDME, SWEETIE?
YOU GONNA MAKE IT WORTH MY WHILE, LOVER?
I SURE AM, SWEETIE. LISSEN, SWEETIE, I GOT MONEY TO BURN.
HUH?
SWEETIE, WHY DON'T YOU TAKE A WALK? DON'T STOP UNTIL YOU REACH SOMEWHERE NICE.
LIKE WYOMING.
19


NOW. YOU AND I TALK.
SURE, SURE...
YOUR NAME IS HARRY SKEVATZ. YOU ARE--OR *WERE*--A JANITOR. ISADORE O'TOOLE LIVED IN THE BUILDING YOU TENDED.
AM I RIGHT SO FAR, HARRY?
NAW, NAW... YOU GOT THE WRONG GUY, MISTER. I'M...AH... *GEORGE* SKEVATZ. HARRY'S MY BROTHER.
YOU LIKE THIS? MAYBE YOU WANT THE WHOLE BOTTLE IN YOUR BELLY?
THAT'D BE GREAT
OKAY. EAT IT.
AWRIGHT, AWRIGHT, I'M HARRY.
20

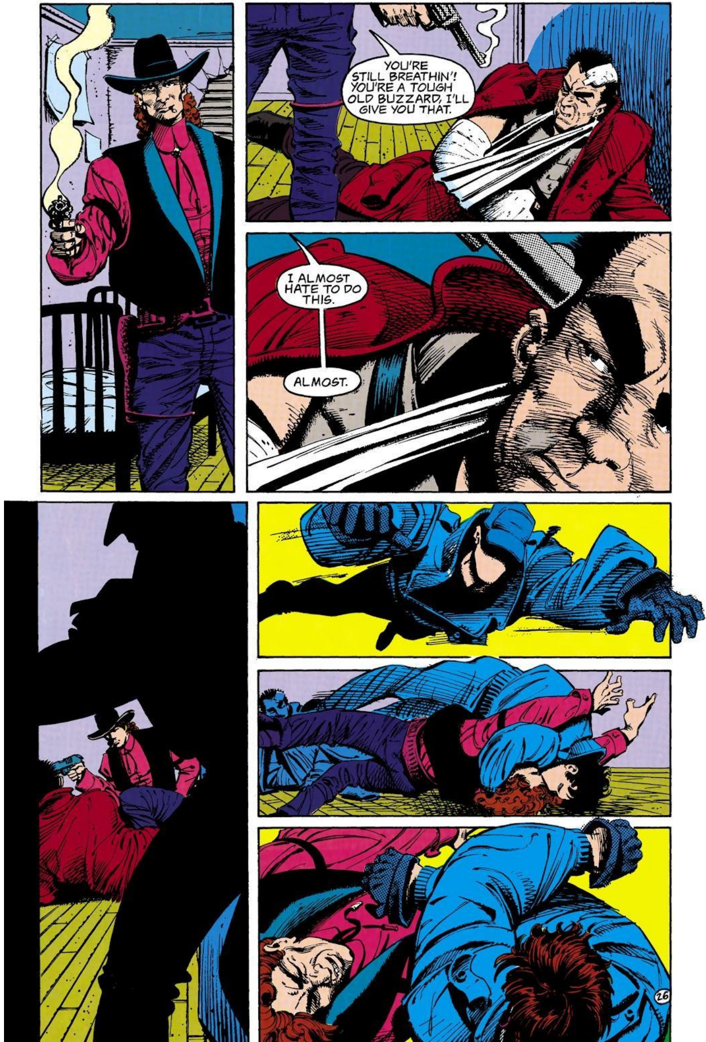

SOMEBODY PAID YOU A LOT OF MONEY TO TELL THEM WHEN O'TOOLE WOULD BE HOME. GAVE YOU A PHONE NUMBER TO CALL WHEN HE CAME IN. YOU CALLED IT AND THEN YOU GOT OUT.
H-HOW'D YOU KNOW?
BECAUSE SOMEBODY HAD TO HAVE TIPPED OFF THE CHOPPER PILOT AND YOU WERE A LIKELY CANDIDATE. I CHECKED AND LEARNED YOU'D BECOME A BIG SPENDER ALL OF A SUDDEN.
O'TOOLE WASN'T KILLED. BUT FOUR OTHER PEOPLE WERE --INCLUDING TWO CHILDREN.
I GOT A THING ABOUT KIDS, HARRY. THING THAT MAKES ME WANT TO HURT YOU. THERE'S ONLY ONE WAY YOU CAN KEEP THAT FROM HAPPENING--
--HAPPENING REAL BIG AND REAL BAD.
HE'S AT THE HOTEL.
WHO'S AT THE HOTEL.
21


THIS AFTERNOON... THE GUY PAID ME TO TELL 'IM WHERE IZZY WENT... I TOLE HIM THE SAVOY HOTEL...
SAVOY HOTEL
105
TAKE A HIKE YA BABY-SITTERS --
--THIS'S AS FAR AS YOU GO. I LET YOU SLEEP INNA ROOM, THEY'LL CHARGE ME DOUBLE.
CHARGE YOU? C'MON, WHO YOU KIDDIN'? PAY FOR A HOTEL ROOM--?
OKAY, OKAY, I'M SORRY. I FORGOT.
DON'T.
WE'LL PICK YEZ UP IN THE MORNIN', LOOTENANT?
O'TOOLE... WAIT!
DON'T GO UP--
HOLD IT, FELLA!
22


H-HE AIN'T GOT NO FACE.
THOSE NEW SUPER-SHARP RAZOR BLADES... GOTTA BE *DAMN* CAREFUL WITH 'EM.
FACE OR NO FACE... HE'S COMIN' DOWNTOWN TO ANSWER SOME QUESTIONS.
OH, HELL.
23


I HATE IT WHEN I HAVE TO BEAT UP THE *GOOD* GUYS.
WHO'RE YOU?
YOU MIGHT AS WELL CALL ME SUNDANCE-- FOR AS LONG AS YOU CAN CALL ME ANYTHING.
YOU'RE WEARIN' A GUN. MIGHT AS WELL GO FOR IT. YOU GOT NOTHIN' TO LOSE.
24




YOU'RE STILL BREATHIN'! YOU'RE A TOUGH OLD BUZZARD, I'LL GIVE YOU THAT.
I ALMOST HATE TO DO THIS.
ALMOST.

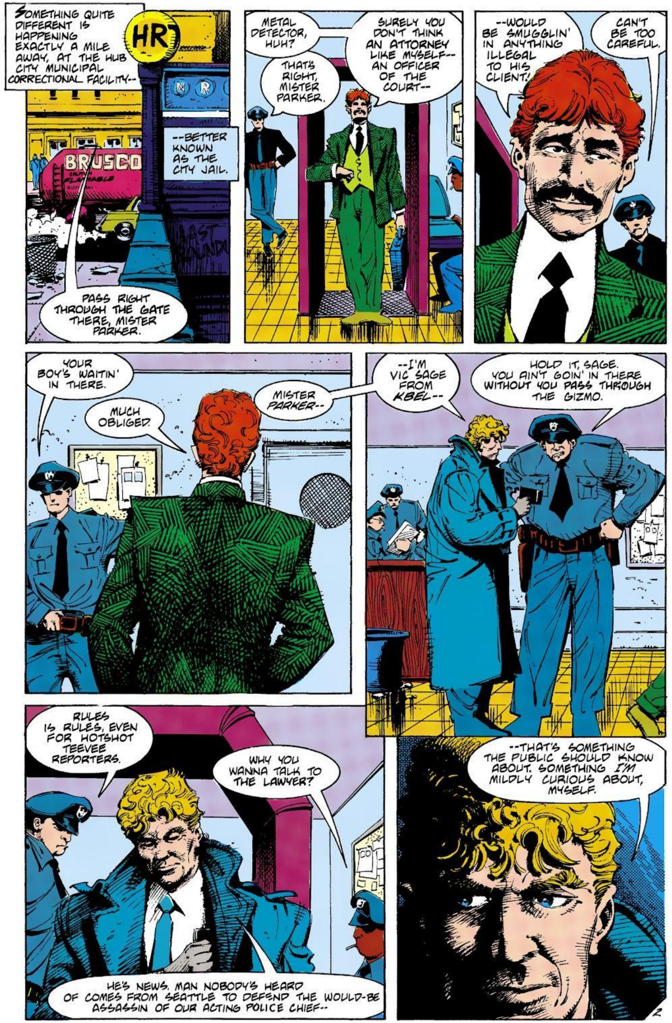


DENNY O'NEIL WRITER **DENYS COWAN & RICK MAGYAR** ARTISTS **STEVE HAYNIE** LETTERER **TATJANA WOOD** COLORIST **MIKE GOLD** EDITOR

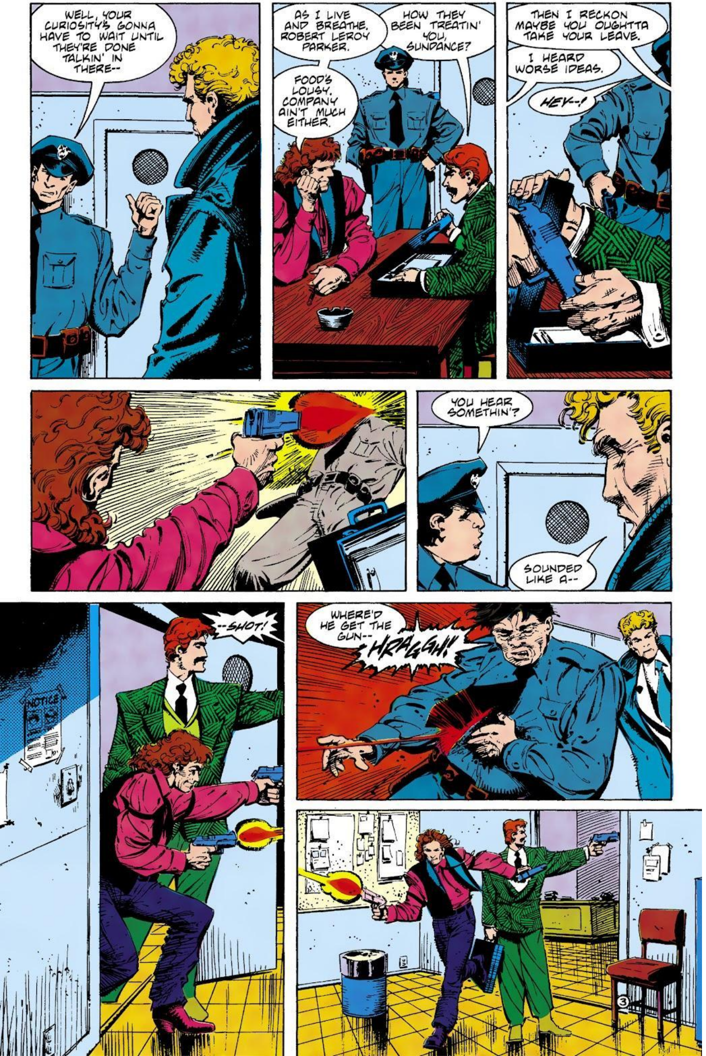

DC
No. 17
JUNE1988
The QUESTION
O'NEIL · COWAN · MAGYAR
SUGGESTED
FOR MATURE
READERS



A DREAM OF RORSCHACH
MISTER HILKEY! THE ROOFTOP AREA IS CLOSED! IT'S TOO COLD--
SO I KNOW IT, SO SHADDAP. TADAY IS DA DAY, I'M TELLIN' YA. I SEEN IT IN A DREAM.
TADAY IS DA DAY DA ANGEL'A DEATH IS GONNA DROP OUTTA DA SKY.
YA T'INK I'M GONNA MISS THAT, NURSEY YER CRAZY!
THIS IS HAPPENING AT THE HUB CITY HOME FOR SENIOR CITIZENS.
Dennis O'Neil —story
Denys Cowan & Rick Magyar —art
Willie Schubert —lettering
Tatjana Wood —coloring
Mike Gold —editing
A VERY SPECIAL THANKS TO ALAN MOORE AND DAVE GIBBONS.



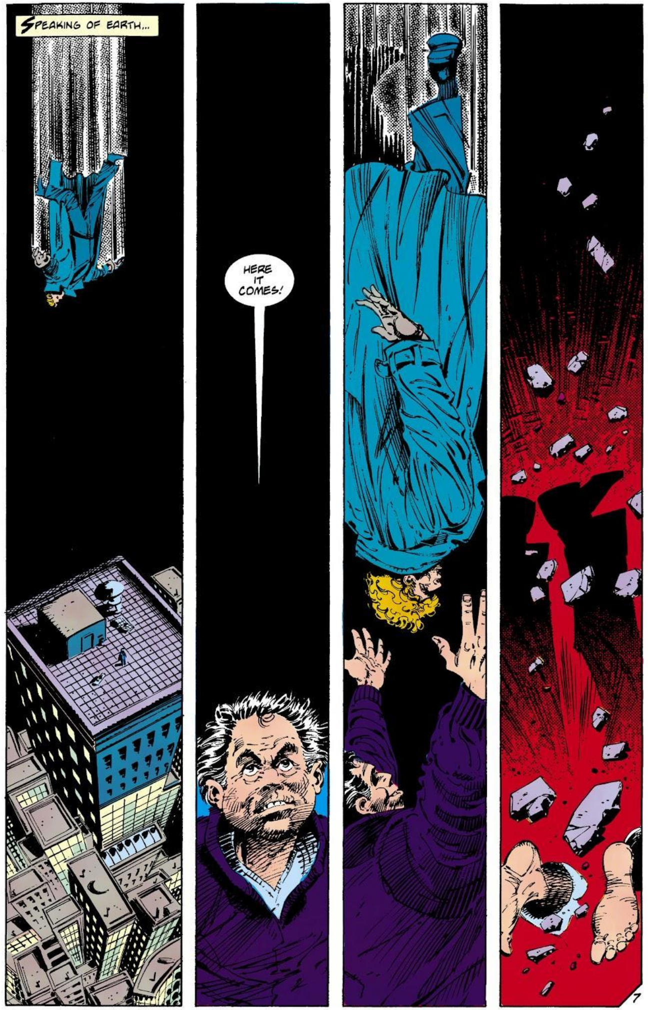
SOMETHING QUITE DIFFERENT IS HAPPENING EXACTLY A MILE AWAY, AT THE HUB CITY MUNICIPAL CORRECTIONAL FACILITY--
HR
BRUSCO
--BETTER KNOWN AS THE CITY JAIL.
PASS RIGHT THROUGH THE GATE THERE, MISTER PARKER.
METAL DETECTOR, HUH?
THAT'S RIGHT, MISTER PARKER.
SURELY YOU DON'T THINK AN ATTORNEY LIKE MYSELF-- AN OFFICER OF THE COURT--
--WOULD BE SMUGGLIN' IN ANYTHING ILLEGAL TO HIS CLIENT!
CAN'T BE TOO CAREFUL.
YOUR BOY'S WAITIN' IN THERE.
MUCH OBLIGED.
MISTER PARKER--
--I'M VIC SAGE FROM KBEL--
HOLD IT, SAGE. YOU AIN'T GOIN' IN THERE WITHOUT YOU PASS THROUGH THE GIZMO.
RULES IS RULES, EVEN FOR HOTSHOT TEEVEE REPORTERS.
WHY YOU WANNA TALK TO THE LAWYER?
HE'S NEWS. MAN NOBODY'S HEARD OF COMES FROM SEATTLE TO DEFEND THE WOULD-BE ASSASSIN OF OUR ACTING POLICE CHIEF--
--THAT'S SOMETHING THE PUBLIC SHOULD KNOW ABOUT. SOMETHING I'M MILDLY CURIOUS ABOUT, MYSELF.


WELL, YOUR CURIOSITY'S GONNA HAVE TO WAIT UNTIL THEY'RE DONE TALKIN' IN THERE--
AS I LIVE AND BREATHE. ROBERT LEROY PARKER.
HOW THEY BEEN TREATIN' YOU, SUNDANCE?
FOOD'S LOUSY. COMPANY AIN'T MUCH EITHER.
THEN I RECKON MAYBE YOU OUGHTTA TAKE YOUR LEAVE.
I HEARD WORSE IDEAS.
HEY--!
YOU HEAR SOMETHIN'?
SOUNDED LIKE A--
--SHOT!
WHERE'D HE GET THE GUN--
HRAGGH!

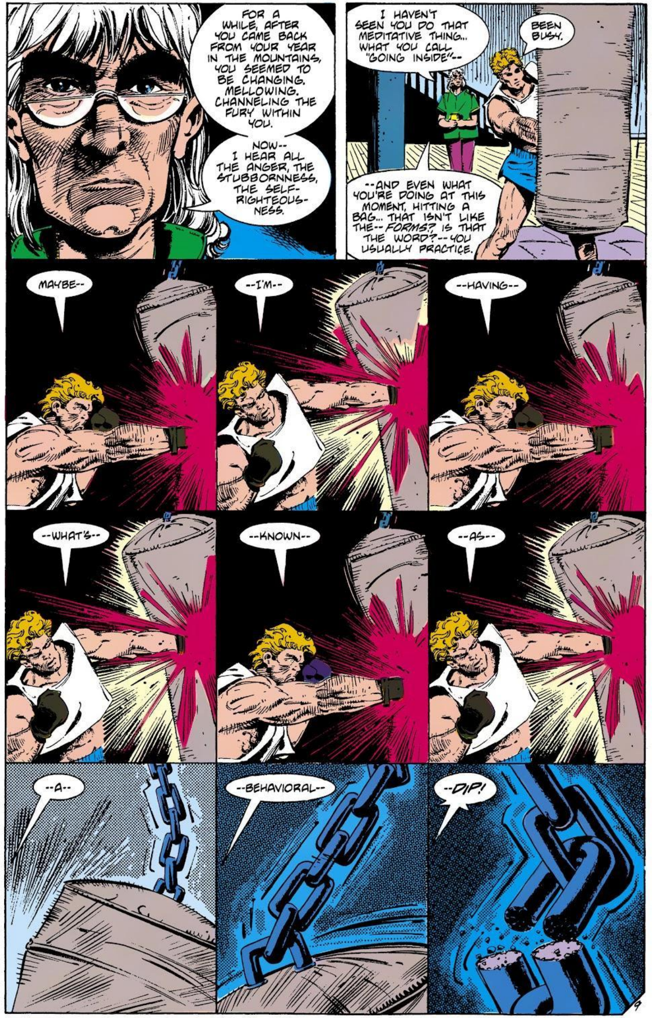

BASTARDS. BUT THEY WON'T GET FAR...
YEAH, THAT DOOR THEY WENT THROUGH LEADS TO THE ROOF. NO WAY OFFA THERE--
REMEMBER, THE FIRST TIME THEY TRIED TO KILL O'TOOLE THEY USED--
--A CHOPPER!
MISTER HILKEY-- WILL YOU PLEASE--
YA SHOULD ONLY SHADDAP, YA WINDBAG.
ANGEL'A DEATH, I'M TELLIN' YA.
I'M GOING AFTER THEM.
YOU'RE CRAZY! YOU AIN'T GOT A GUN.
THAT'S WHAT YOU THOUGHT ABOUT PARKER!
THERE'S OUR TRANSPORTATION... RIGHT ON TIME.

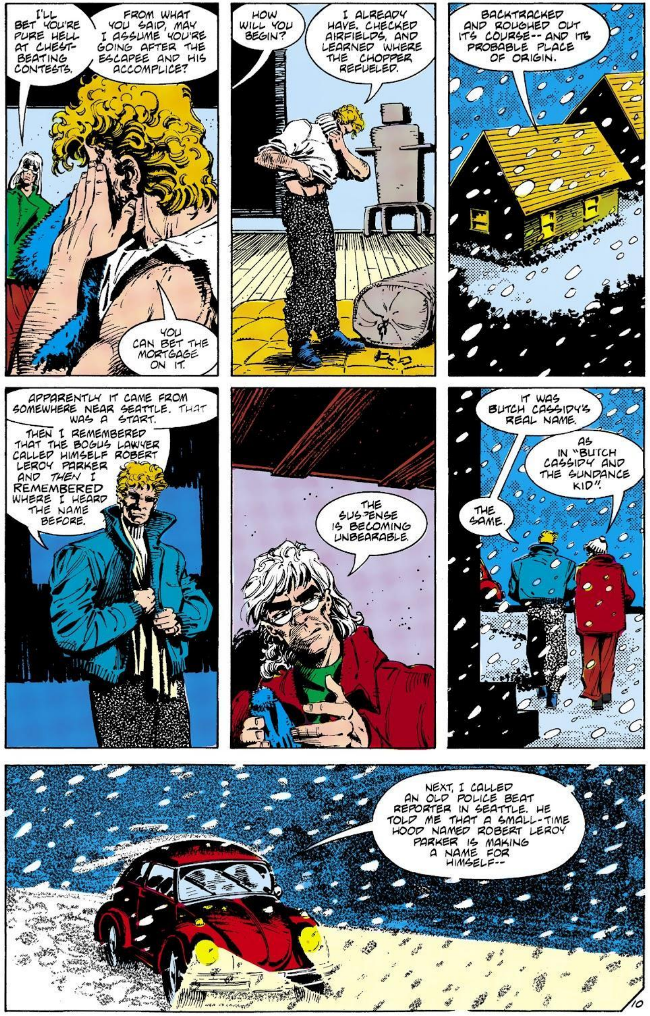

I'LL TAKE OVER.
YOU GOT IT.
SUNDANCE--
--LOOK!
WHO IS THAT?
DON'T KNOW--
--DON'T CARE.
SHOULD I TRY AN' SHOOT 'IM?
NO SENSE IN WASTIN' A BULLET, BUTCH.
5

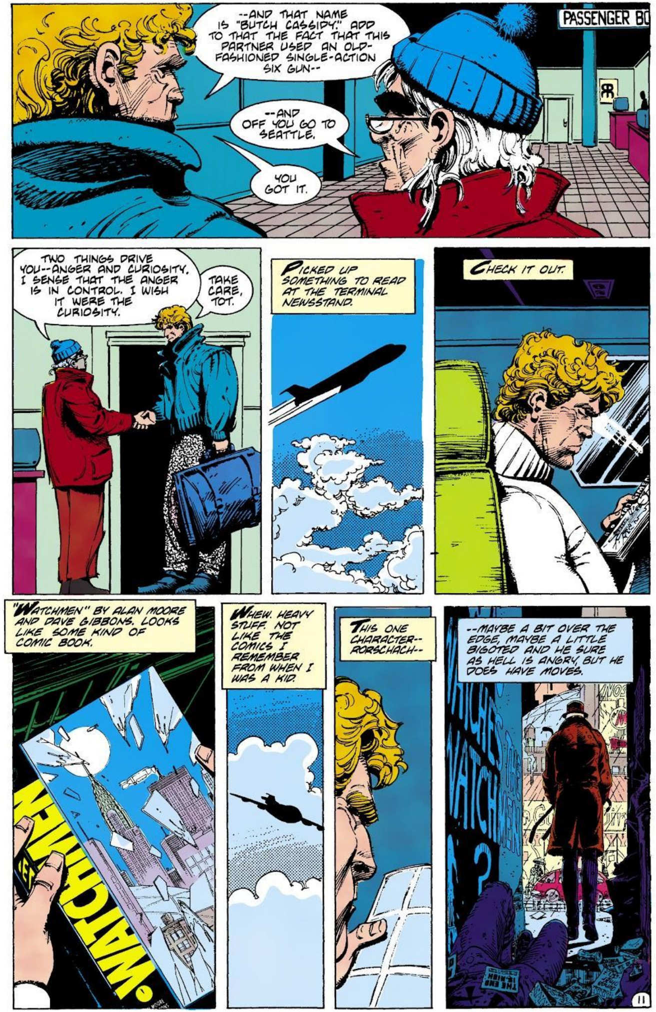

WE'LL JUST PRETEND THIS CHOPPER'S A BRONC... AN' THAT SONUVABITCH HANGIN' ON DOWN THERE--
--IS SOME POOR, DUMB COWBOY...
YOU CRAZY?
HELL, YES. THAT AIN'T NOTHIN' NEW.
AT A TIME LIKE THIS, A MAN'S GOT TO ASK HIMSELF: WHAT AM I DOING HERE--
--AND WHY ON EARTH AM I DOING IT?
6


SPEAKING OF EARTH...
HERE IT COMES!

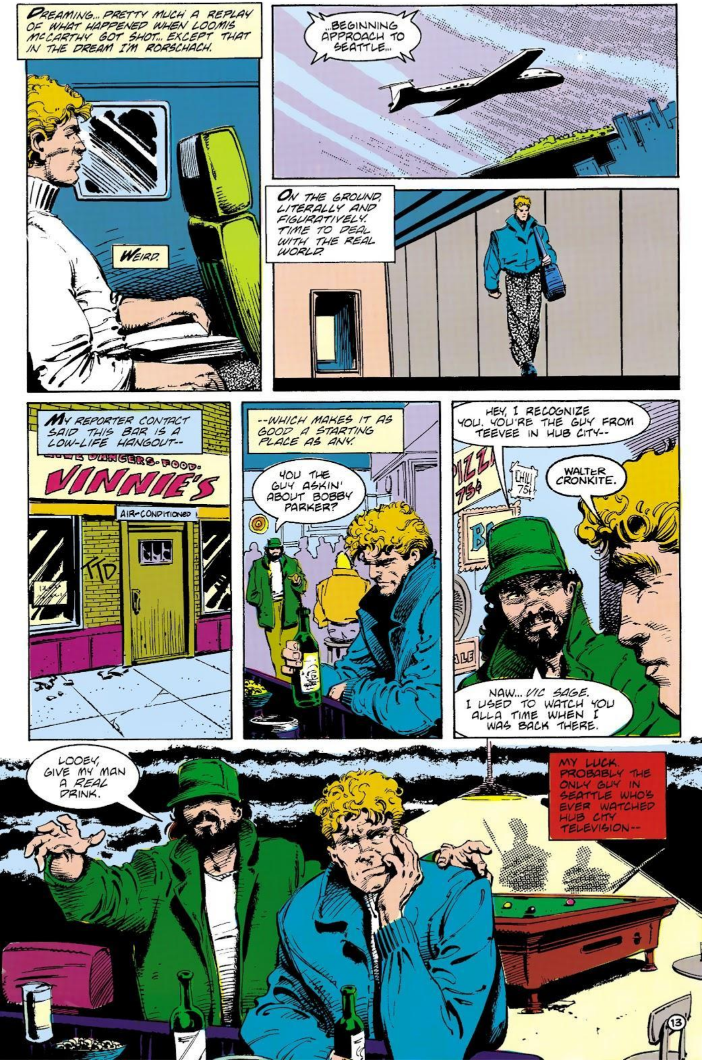

PRAISE BE... I'LL NEVER DOUBT AGAIN...
...I TOOK 'IM THROUGH THE METAL DETECTOR MYSELF. HE COULDN'T'A HAD A PIECE.
PLASTIC. HADDA BE. I READ ABOUT 'EM PLASTIC GUNS.
LIKE KIDS' TOYS, ONLY THEY SHOOT REAL BULLETS AND REAL PEOPLE GET KILLED...
THEY SAY THE OLD MAN HAD MORE DISEASES THAN THERE ARE NAMES FOR, CHARLIE.
IT'S A MIRACLE HE DIDN'T DIE YEARS AGO. HE WAS IN CONSTANT PAIN... SUFFERING... YOU DID HIM A FAVOR.
SAVE YOUR BREATH, TOT. NOTHING CHANGES THE FACT THAT I KILLED AN OLD MAN--
--AND GOT AWAY WITHOUT A SCRATCH!
FOR THAT, THEY PAY. BIG.
YOU WORRY ME. YOU'RE SOUNDING LIKE THE OLD VIC SAGE.
SUE ME.

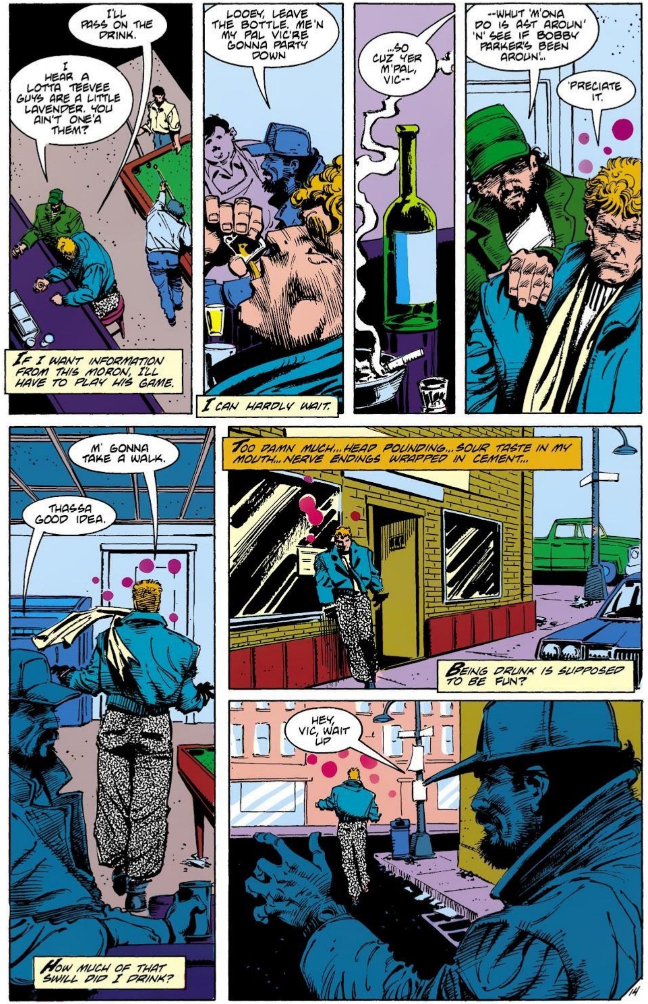

FOR A WHILE, AFTER YOU CAME BACK FROM YOUR YEAR IN THE MOUNTAINS, YOU SEEMED TO BE CHANGING, MELLOWING. CHANNELING THE FURY WITHIN YOU.
NOW-- I HEAR ALL THE ANGER, THE STUBBORNNESS, THE SELF-RIGHTEOUS-NESS.
I HAVEN'T SEEN YOU DO THAT MEDITATIVE THING... WHAT YOU CALL "GOING INSIDE"--
BEEN BUSY.
--AND EVEN WHAT YOU'RE DOING AT THIS MOMENT, HITTING A BAG... THAT ISN'T LIKE THE--*FORMS?* IS THAT THE WORD?--YOU USUALLY PRACTICE.
MAYBE--
--I'M--
--HAVING--
--WHAT'S--
--KNOWN--
--AS--
--A--
--BEHAVIORAL--
--*DIP!*

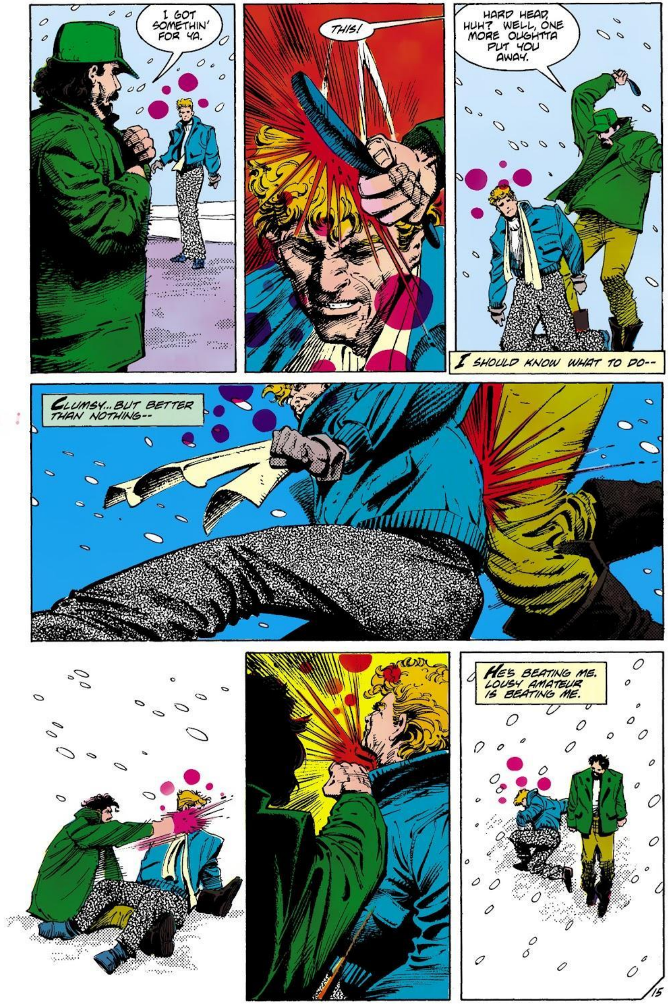

I'LL BET YOU'RE PURE HELL AT CHEST-BEATING CONTESTS.
FROM WHAT YOU SAID, MAY I ASSUME YOU'RE GOING AFTER THE ESCAPEE AND HIS ACCOMPLICE?
YOU CAN BET THE MORTGAGE ON IT.
HOW WILL YOU BEGIN?
I ALREADY HAVE. CHECKED AIRFIELDS, AND LEARNED WHERE THE CHOPPER REFUELED.
BACKTRACKED AND ROUGHED OUT ITS COURSE-- AND ITS PROBABLE PLACE OF ORIGIN.
APPARENTLY IT CAME FROM SOMEWHERE NEAR SEATTLE. THAT WAS A START.
THEN I REMEMBERED THAT THE BOGUS LAWYER CALLED HIMSELF ROBERT LEROY PARKER AND *THEN* I REMEMBERED WHERE I HEARD THE NAME BEFORE.
THE SUSPENSE IS BECOMING UNBEARABLE.
IT WAS BUTCH CASSIDY'S REAL NAME.
AS IN "BUTCH CASSIDY AND THE SUNDANCE KID".
THE SAME.
NEXT, I CALLED AN OLD POLICE BEAT REPORTER IN SEATTLE. HE TOLD ME THAT A SMALL-TIME HOOD NAMED ROBERT LEROY PARKER IS MAKING A NAME FOR HIMSELF--


PASSENGER BO
--AND THAT NAME IS "BUTCH CASSIDY." ADD TO THAT THE FACT THAT THIS PARTNER USED AN OLD-FASHIONED SINGLE-ACTION SIX GUN--
--AND OFF YOU GO TO SEATTLE.
YOU GOT IT.
TWO THINGS DRIVE YOU--ANGER AND CURIOSITY. I SENSE THAT THE ANGER IS IN CONTROL. I WISH IT WERE THE CURIOSITY.
TAKE CARE, TOT.
PICKED UP SOMETHING TO READ AT THE TERMINAL NEWSSTAND.
CHECK IT OUT.
"WATCHMEN" BY ALAN MOORE AND DAVE GIBBONS. LOOKS LIKE SOME KIND OF COMIC BOOK.
WATCHMEN
WHEW. HEAVY STUFF. NOT LIKE THE COMICS I REMEMBER FROM WHEN I WAS A KID.
THIS ONE CHARACTER-- RORSCHACH--
--MAYBE A BIT OVER THE EDGE, MAYBE A LITTLE BIGOTED AND HE SURE AS HELL IS ANGRY, BUT HE DOES HAVE MOVES.
11

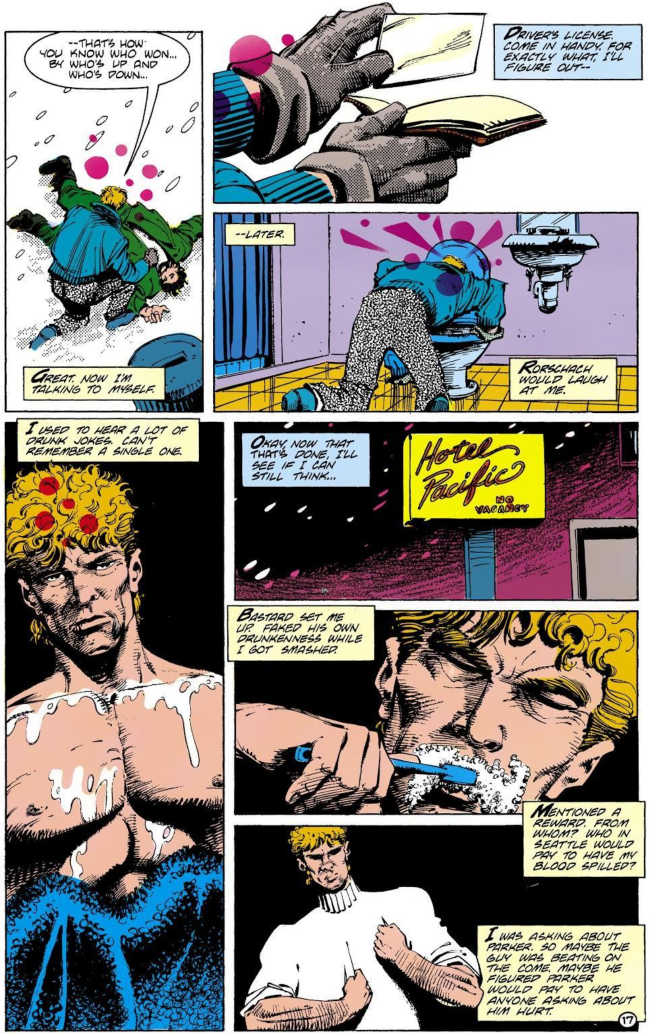

WONDER IF TOT COULD RIG ME A MASK LIKE THAT.
NOT MUCH SLEEP LAST NIGHT... TIRED.. NODDING...
VIC-- WATCH OUT!
WHY'D YOU DO IT, McCARTHY? WHY'D YOU TAKE THOSE SLUGS FOR ME?
HE WAS A REAL HERO
DON'T YOU CALL HIM THAT! DON'T YOU DARE!
MAYBE THERE ARE NO HEROES... AND NO VILLAINS, EITHER. MAYBE THERE IS NOT ONE DAMN VILLAIN IN THE WORLD...
12

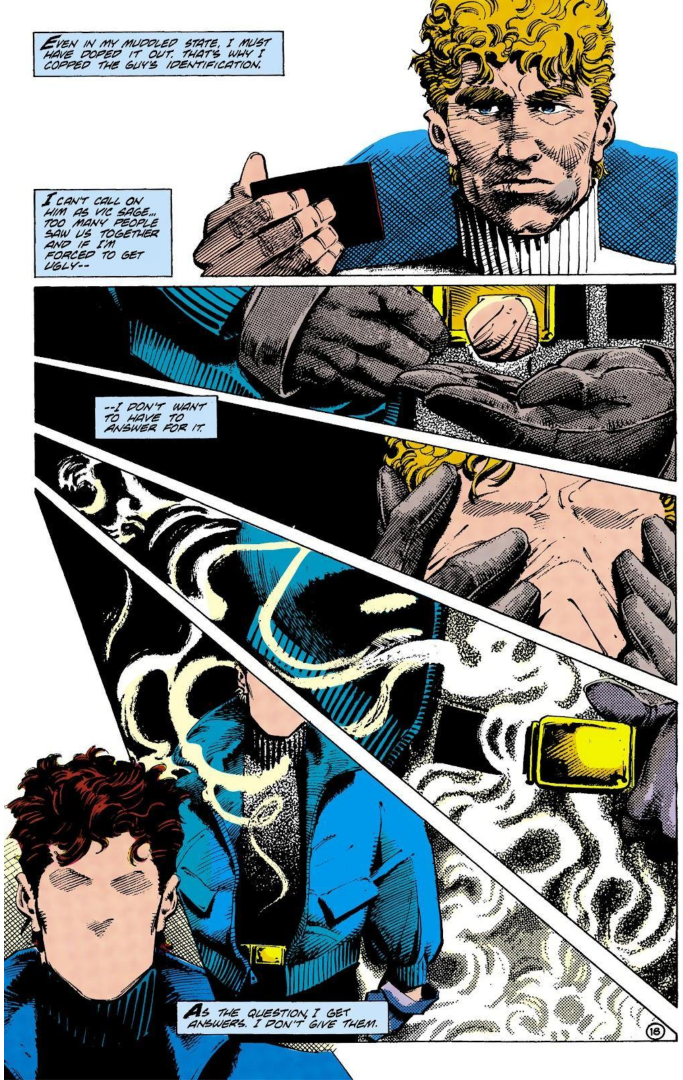

DREAMING... PRETTY MUCH A REPLAY OF WHAT HAPPENED WHEN LOOMIS McCARTHY GOT SHOT... EXCEPT THAT IN THE DREAM I'M RORSCHACH.
WEIRD.
...BEGINNING APPROACH TO SEATTLE...
ON THE GROUND, LITERALLY AND FIGURATIVELY. TIME TO DEAL WITH THE REAL WORLD.
MY REPORTER CONTACT SAID THIS BAR IS A LOW-LIFE HANGOUT--
VINNIE'S
AIR-CONDITIONED
--WHICH MAKES IT AS GOOD A STARTING PLACE AS ANY.
YOU THE GUY ASKIN' ABOUT BOBBY PARKER?
HEY, I RECOGNIZE YOU. YOU'RE THE GUY FROM TEEVEE IN HUB CITY--
WALTER CRONKITE.
NAW... VIC SAGE. I USED TO WATCH YOU ALLA TIME WHEN I WAS BACK THERE.
LOOEY, GIVE MY MAN A REAL DRINK.
MY LUCK. PROBABLY THE ONLY GUY IN SEATTLE WHO'S EVER WATCHED HUB CITY TELEVISION--
13


I HEAR A LOTTA TEEVEE GUYS ARE A LITTLE LAVENDER. YOU AIN'T ONE'A THEM?
I'LL PASS ON THE DRINK.
IF I WANT INFORMATION FROM THIS MORON, I'LL HAVE TO PLAY HIS GAME.
LOOEY, LEAVE THE BOTTLE. ME'N MY PAL VIC'RE GONNA PARTY DOWN
I CAN HARDLY WAIT.
...SO CUZ YER M'PAL, VIC--
--WHUT 'M'ONA DO IS AST AROUN' 'N' SEE IF BOBBY PARKER'S BEEN AROUN'...
'PRECIATE IT.
M' GONNA TAKE A WALK.
THASSA GOOD IDEA.
HOW MUCH OF THAT SWILL DID I DRINK?
TOO DAMN MUCH... HEAD POUNDING... SOUR TASTE IN MY MOUTH... NERVE ENDINGS WRAPPED IN CEMENT...
BEING DRUNK IS SUPPOSED TO BE FUN?
HEY, VIC, WAIT UP
14


I GOT SOMETHIN' FOR YA.
THIS!
HARD HEAD, HUH? WELL, ONE MORE OUGHTTA PUT YOU AWAY.
I SHOULD KNOW WHAT TO DO--
CLUMSY...BUT BETTER THAN NOTHING--
HE'S BEATING ME. LOUSY AMATEUR IS BEATING ME.


LOUSY BOOZE.
OKAY, MISTER BIG-TIME TEEVEE HOTSHOT, WHAT I'M GOING TO DO IS HIT YOU A FEW SHOTS WITH MY SAP, BUST A COUPLE BONES, AND THEN I'M GONNA KICK IN A FEW RIBS AND THEN I'M GONNA MAYBE COLLECT A FAT REWARD--
YOU TALK TOO MUCH.
WAY TOO MUCH.
DID I WIN? MUSTA. HE'S DOWN AND I'M UP--


--THAT'S HOW YOU KNOW WHO WON... BY WHO'S UP AND WHO'S DOWN...
GREAT. NOW I'M TALKING TO MYSELF.
DRIVER'S LICENSE. COME IN HANDY. FOR EXACTLY WHAT, I'LL FIGURE OUT--
--LATER.
RORSCHACH WOULD LAUGH AT ME.
I USED TO HEAR A LOT OF DRUNK JOKES. CAN'T REMEMBER A SINGLE ONE.
OKAY, NOW THAT THAT'S DONE, I'LL SEE IF I CAN STILL THINK...
Hotel Pacific
NO VACANCY
BASTARD SET ME UP. FAKED HIS OWN DRUNKENNESS WHILE I GOT SMASHED.
MENTIONED A REWARD. FROM WHOM? WHO IN SEATTLE WOULD PAY TO HAVE MY BLOOD SPILLED?
I WAS ASKING ABOUT PARKER. SO MAYBE THE GUY WAS BEATING ON THE COME. MAYBE HE FIGURED PARKER WOULD PAY TO HAVE ANYONE ASKING ABOUT HIM HURT.
17


EVEN IN MY MUDDLED STATE, I MUST HAVE DOPED IT OUT. THAT'S WHY I COPPED THE GUY'S IDENTIFICATION.
I CAN'T CALL ON HIM AS VIC SAGE... TOO MANY PEOPLE SAW US TOGETHER AND IF I'M FORCED TO GET UGLY--
--I DON'T WANT TO HAVE TO ANSWER FOR IT.
AS THE QUESTION, I GET ANSWERS. I DON'T GIVE THEM.
18


I COULD SIT HERE IN THIS RENTAL CAR AND KEEP AN EYE ON THE BASTARD'S HOUSE UNTIL SOMETHING HAPPENED.
BUT I ASK MYSELF: WHAT WOULD RORSCHACH DO?
HE'D KICK ASS.
19


PLASTIC. A TERRORIST'S PIECE... GOOD FOR BEATING METAL DETECTORS AND SLAUGHTERING INNOCENTS.
IF I HAD ANY DOUBTS ABOUT YOU--
--THAT THING ERASED THEM.
WHO THE HELL--
I'LL ASK THE QUESTIONS.
STARTING NOW.
WHERE IS PARKER?
I DON'T KNOW NO--
20





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YOU FIND OUT WHAT'S WITH HIS FACE?
IF IT'S A MASK, IT WON'T COME OFF.
WE'LL PUT 'IM IN THE PICKUP. YOU DRIVE THAT, I'LL TAKE HIS CAR. WE'LL DITCH IT WITH THE BODY.
SOUNDS GOOD.
YOU AWAKE YET? YOU KNOW WHAT'S GONNA HAPPEN TO YOU?
HURM
WHATEVER IT IS, I DESERVE IT. I DIDN'T HEAR THE OTHER GUY COMING, DIDN'T STOP TO THINK THERE MIGHT BE ANOTHER GUY.
23


WE'RE GONNA TAKE YOU UP INTO THE MOUNTAINS, MAYBE BREAK YOUR ARMS AND LEGS, LET YOU FREEZE TO DEATH. GIVE YOU A LOTTA TIME TO THINK ABOUT HOW TOUGH YOU ARE.
TOT SAID MY ANGER WAS IN CONTROL AND HE WAS RIGHT AND WHEN I'M RIDING ANGER I MAKE MISTAKES. STUPID MISTAKES.
WHY DIDN'T I LISTEN?
MIGHT BE MY ONLY CHANCE--
DAMN!
24


WHERE'D HE GO?
I DUNNO... BUT HE WON'T GET FAR IN THIS WEATHER...
ALL WE GOTTA DO IS FOLLOW HIS FOOTPRINTS.
HOW DID RORSCHACH END UP?
OH, YEH... DEAD, HE ENDED UP. A WET SPOT IN THE SNOW. WHY'D I HAVE TO REMEMBER THAT?
WHY DO I HAVE TO KEEP LEARNING THE SAME LESSONS OVER AND OVER? BEING TOUGH IS NOT ENOUGH...
MAY HAVE LEARNED IT FOR THE LAST TIME... THEY'RE CLOSE--


STORM ENDS...
PINES SILHOUETTE AGAINST THE MOON...
PINES BENDING WITH THE WIND...
A FEELING THAT NATURE IS TRYING TO TELL ME SOMETHING...
WELL, WELL.


KNOW WHAT? THIS PIECE HOLDS SEVEN ROUNDS. I'M GONNA START AT YOUR ANKLES AND WORK UP AND THEN I'M GONNA RELOAD AND--
CUT THE CRAP AND KILL 'IM ALREADY. I'M COLD.
YOUR PROBLEM IS YOU GOT NO SENSE'A FUN.
ANY LAST WORDS?
YEAH. RORSCHACH SUCKS.
AAAGH
IS THAT... AN ARROW?
WHO ARE YOU?
27


THE GOOD GUY.
To be continued...


DC
No. 18
JULY1988
The QUESTION™
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A MOMENT AGO, TWO SHAFTS WHIPPED FROM THE DARKNESS. THEN, THERE WAS ONLY THE MOAN OF THE WIND AND THE GENTLE CRACKLING OF THE SNOW. AND NOW--
Desperate Ground
WELL, WELL, THE CAVALRY ARRIVES. ONLY YOU LOOK MORE LIKE THE INDIANS.
PERSONALLY, I LIKE TO THINK OF MYSELF AS A MODERN ROBIN HOOD.
YOU SHOT US WITH... ARROWS!
THAT... THAT IS-- CRUEL!
Dennis O'Neil —story
Denys Cowan & Rick Magyar —art
Willie Schubert —lettering
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Mike Gold —editing
G-3883

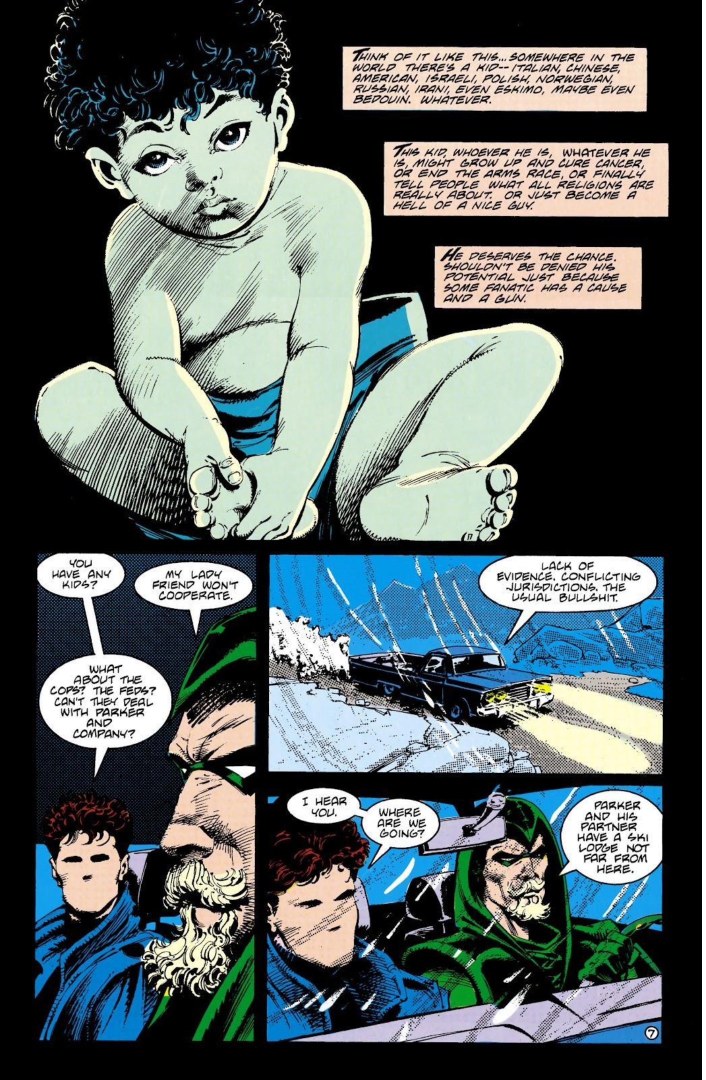

I'VE GOT A FLASH FOR YOU... THEY DON'T GIVE HUMANITARIAN AWARDS FOR BLOWING OUT BRAINS WITH HANDGUNS, EITHER.
HOLD STILL.
YOU'RE HURTIN' ME.
YOU CAN EITHER TAKE THE PAIN--
--OR KEEP ON BLEEDING. YOU MIGHT DIE.
HOLD THE WOUND TILL THE BLOOD CLOTS.
YOUR TURN.
HEY, CUT ME LOOSE... THEN DO YOUR FLORENCE NIGHTINGALE NUMBER.
NO.
WHY NOT?
'CAUSE I DON'T KNOW WHO YOU ARE.
I'M THE GUY THE BAD GUYS WERE ABOUT TO KILL, REMEMBER?
DOESN'T MAKE YOU A GOOD GUY. PUNKS ARE ALWAYS OFFING PUNKS.
BESIDES, MOTHER TOLD ME NEVER TO TRUST SOMEONE WITHOUT A FACE.
WHEREAS MODEL CITIZENS ALWAYS GO AROUND WEARING MASKS.
IT KEEPS MY BEARD COMPANY.
2

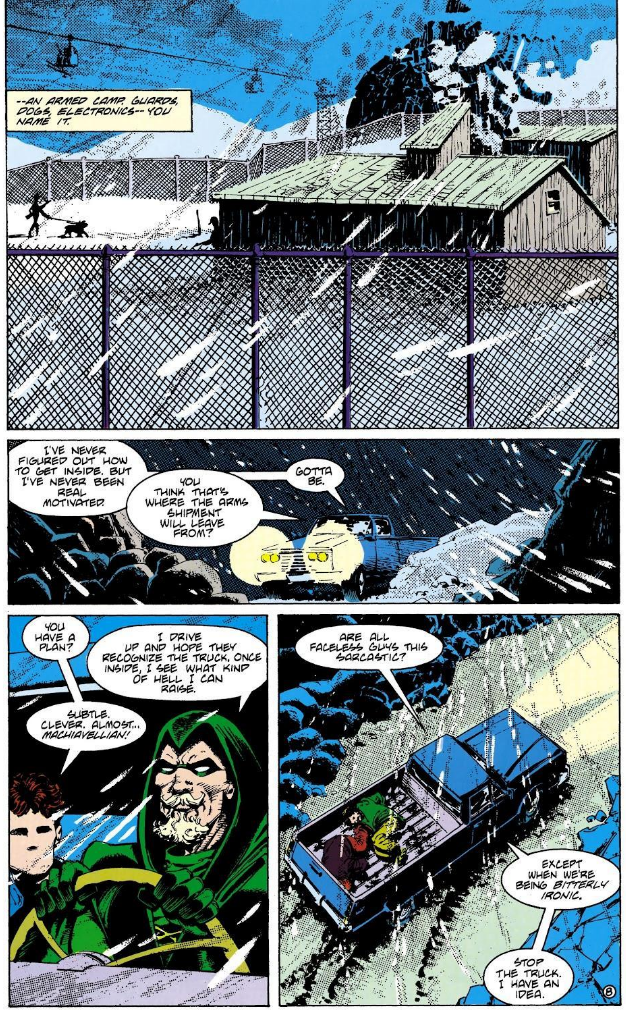

SOME WOULD CALL YOUR ANSWER ENIGMATIC. OR HUMOROUS. OR MAYBE EVEN ZEN-LIKE. WANT TO KNOW WHAT I CALL IT?
NOT PARTICULARLY.
WE'D BETTER HURRY. WEATHER FORECAST CALLS FOR ANOTHER BLIZZARD BEGINNING AROUND MIDNIGHT, AND THIS MOUNTAIN IS NOT A GOOD PLACE TO SIT OUT A MAJOR STORM.
IF I TELL YOU WHY I'M HERE, WILL YOU UNTIE ME?
IT'LL BE A MARK IN THE PLUS COLUMN. IF I LIKE WHAT YOU SAY.
A MAN NAMED ROBERT LEROY PARKER TRIED TO KILL A FRIEND OF MINE. ANOTHER MAN BROKE HIM OUT OF JAIL. I TRACED THEM TO SEATTLE AND LEARNED THAT--
--THESE TWO WORK FOR THEM. I FOLLOWED ONE OF THEM--
--AND BLUNDERED IN AND GOT YOURSELF CLOBBERED.
I WAS WATCHING, HOPING THESE TWO WOULD LEAD ME TO THEIR BOSS.
DUMBEST PLAY I EVER SAW.
HEY, DON'T SPARE MY FEELINGS. IF YOU DON'T LIKE SOMETHING, SAY SO.
THEN YOU FOLLOWED US?
BETTER. I HID IN THE BACK OF THE PICKUP.
FROZE MY BUTT OFF.
3


HEY, MAN, I'M WOOZY. LOST A LOTTA BLOOD. GIMME HAND.
OKAY, TAKE IT EASY--
NICE KICK. WHAT WAS THAT-- TAE KWON DO?
NOT EXACTLY. IT'S PART OF A SYSTEM I LEARNED FROM A MAN NAMED RICHARD. HE DIDN'T CALL IT ANYTHING IN PARTICULAR.
RICHARD, HUH? I'VE HEARD RUMORS ABOUT A RICHARD...A HERMIT SUPPOSED TO BE THE LAST LIVING DISCIPLE OF THE LEGENDARY O-SENSEI. SOME SAY HE'S CRIPPLED, SOME SAY HE RUNS LIKE A GAZELLE.
HE'S CRIPPLED.
CUT ME LOOSE.
NOT TILL I GET A HANDLE ON YOU. YOU DON'T MAKE SENSE YET.
4


WHY DIDN'T WE TAKE THE CAR? IT'D BE MORE COMFORTABLE.
NOT AS GOOD IN THE SNOW. WE MIGHT NOT BEAT THE STORM BACK TO CIVILIZATION.
WHAT ARE YOU DOING?
CHECKING THE C.B. SEE IF WE CAN PICK UP A WEATHER REPORT--
...LESS'N ONE HOUR 'FORE SHE SNOWS LIKE A SUMBITCH. BEST GIT THE CHOPPER LANDED AN' LOADED AN' OFF.
DAMN.
WHAT'S WRONG?
THAT WAS PARKER. I RECOGNIZED THE VOICE--AND THAT PHONY COWBOY DRAWL.
HE'S GIVING INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE PICKUP OF AN ARMS SHIPMENT.
WHY ARE YOU TURNING AROUND?
I'VE GOT TO STOP HIM.
IT'S YOUR BUSINESS?
LISTEN, PARKER AND HIS PARTNER SELL GUNS TO TERRORISTS-- *PLASTIC* GUNS THEY GET FROM A MANUFACTURER IN ENGLAND.
A MONTH AGO, A MEMBER OF A MIDDLE EASTERN SECT SMUGGLED ONE OF PARKER'S TOYS PAST A METAL DETECTOR ONTO AN AIRLINER IN ROME--
5


HE GUNNED DOWN AN OLD MAN WHO WAS ASKING HIM A QUESTION--
THEN, WHEN TWO BABIES GOT SCARED AND STARTED CRYING--
--HE KILLED THEM, TOO.
YOU'RE SURE OF ALL THIS?
PEOPLE TELL ME THINGS.
WHAT'S YOUR INTEREST? WHY DOES IT CONCERN YOU?
MAYBE YOU DIDN'T HEAR ME... INNOCENTS ARE DYING. OLD MEN. BABIES!
6


THINK OF IT LIKE THIS... SOMEWHERE IN THE WORLD THERE'S A KID-- ITALIAN, CHINESE, AMERICAN, ISRAELI, POLISH, NORWEGIAN, RUSSIAN, IRANI, EVEN ESKIMO, MAYBE EVEN BEDOUIN. WHATEVER.
THIS KID, WHOEVER HE IS, WHATEVER HE IS, MIGHT GROW UP AND CURE CANCER, OR END THE ARMS RACE, OR FINALLY TELL PEOPLE WHAT ALL RELIGIONS ARE REALLY ABOUT. OR JUST BECOME A HELL OF A NICE GUY.
HE DESERVES THE CHANCE. SHOULDN'T BE DENIED HIS POTENTIAL JUST BECAUSE SOME FANATIC HAS A CAUSE AND A GUN.
YOU HAVE ANY KIDS?
MY LADY FRIEND WON'T COOPERATE.
WHAT ABOUT THE COPS? THE FEDS? CAN'T THEY DEAL WITH PARKER AND COMPANY?
LACK OF EVIDENCE. CONFLICTING JURISDICTIONS. THE USUAL BULLSHIT.
I HEAR YOU.
WHERE ARE WE GOING?
PARKER AND HIS PARTNER HAVE A SKI LODGE NOT FAR FROM HERE.
7


--AN ARMED CAMP. GUARDS, DOGS, ELECTRONICS-- YOU NAME IT.
I'VE NEVER FIGURED OUT HOW TO GET INSIDE. BUT I'VE NEVER BEEN REAL MOTIVATED.
YOU THINK THAT'S WHERE THE ARMS SHIPMENT WILL LEAVE FROM?
GOTTA BE.
YOU HAVE A PLAN?
I DRIVE UP AND HOPE THEY RECOGNIZE THE TRUCK. ONCE INSIDE, I SEE WHAT KIND OF HELL I CAN RAISE.
SUBTLE. CLEVER. ALMOST... MACHIAVELLIAN!
ARE ALL FACELESS GUYS THIS SARCASTIC?
EXCEPT WHEN WE'RE BEING BITTERLY IRONIC.
STOP THE TRUCK. I HAVE AN IDEA.
8


MY MAN ROBIN HOOD DECIDED HE SHOULDN'T TAKE YOU TWO WHERE YOU DON'T WANT TO GO. SO WE'RE LEAVING YOU HERE. BUT WE'LL BE BACK.
IN THREE OR FOUR MONTHS.
SEE YOU IN THE SPRING.
WHA--?
WAIT--!
STAY COOL, GUYS.
WE'LL FREEZE!
SURE. BUT LOOK ON THE BRIGHT SIDE...IT'LL KEEP YOU FROM STARVING TO DEATH.
WH... WHADAYA WANT?
THE PASSWORD. THE ONE THAT GETS YOU INTO THE LODGE.
IT'S... IT'S "WHOOPPEE TI-YI-YI GIT ALONG LITTLE DOGIE."

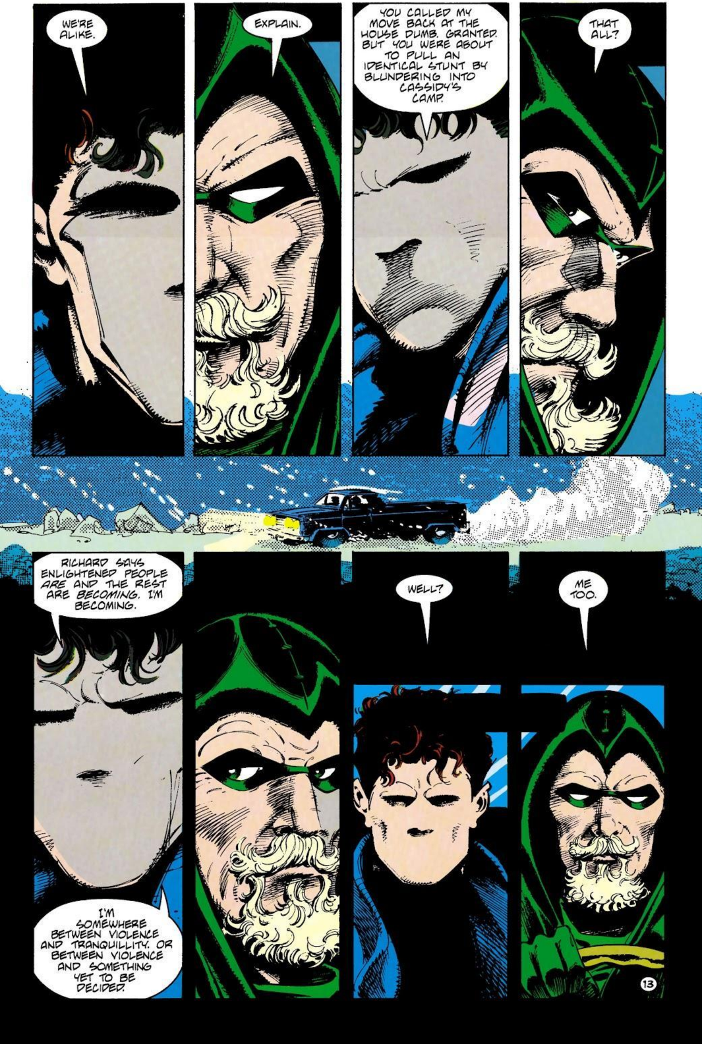

HE'S LYING.
NO. THAT'S TOO STUPID TO BE A LIE. BESIDES, IT FITS IN WITH PARKER'S BUTCH CASSIDY OBSESSION.
HEY, HOW'D YOU KNOW THERE IS A PASSWORD?
BUTCH CASSIDY WOULD HAVE TO HAVE A PASSWORD.
"HE WHO KNOWS HIS ENEMY AND KNOWS HIMSELF NEED NOT FEAR THE RESULT OF A HUNDRED BATTLES."
SUN TZU'S "THE ART OF WAR," RIGHT?
RIGHT. CUT ME LOOSE.
NOT YET.
OKAY. BUT DON'T WAIT TILL WE GET TO WHERE WE'RE GOING.
I TELL YA, SUNDANCE, WE SHOULDA HEARD BY NOW.
EDDIE SAID HE'D CALL SOON'S HE PUT THAT FACELESS HOMBRE IN THE GROUND.
Y'KNOW, BUTCH, I BEEN THINKIN' 'BOUT HIM AND HIS SIDEKICK SKINNY. WAY I SEE IT, THOSE TWO'RE A REAL RISK TO US--
10

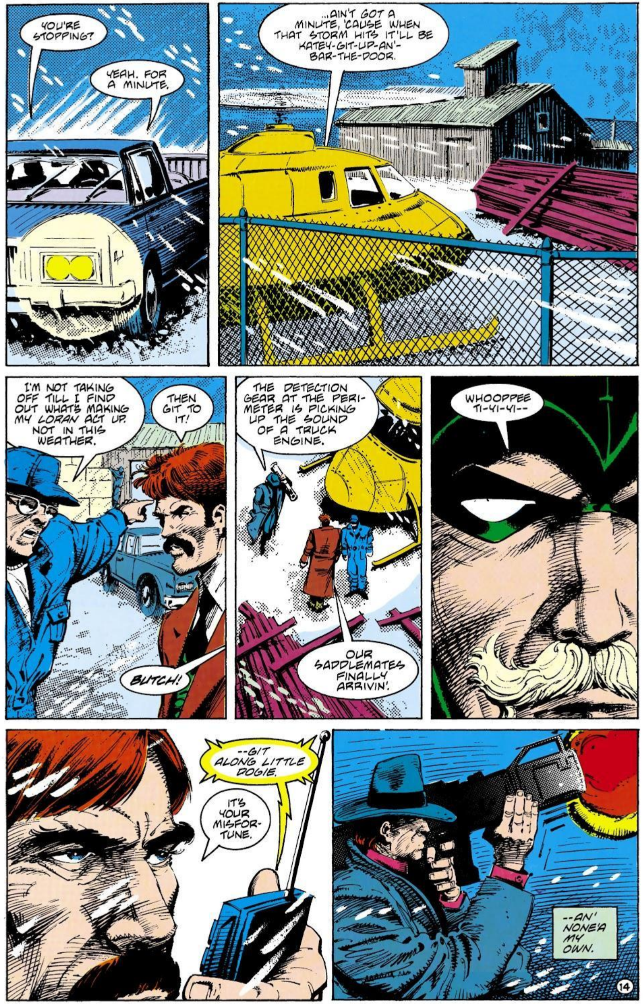


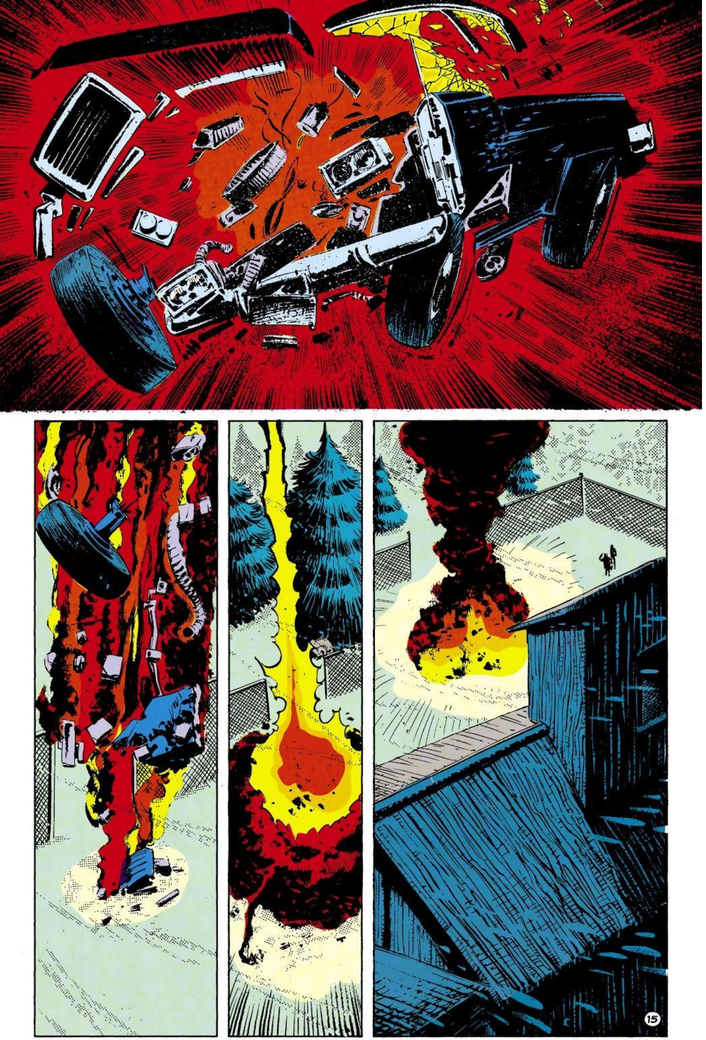
--THE WAY THEY'RE ALWAYS GOIN' OFF TO SEATTLE AN' GETTIN' DRUNK AN' SHOOTIN' OFF THEIR MOUTHS AN' ALL.
NOW THIS BABY HERE IS A ROCKET LAUNCHER.
WHAT I THINK I'LL DO IS, SOON'S THEY SHOW UP, I'LL BLOW 'EM TO BITS.
WHATAYA THINK, BUTCH?
SEEMS LIKE A REAL UNFRIENDLY THING TO DO TO A COUPLE'A SADDLEMATES. BUT I RECKON, IT'S BEST.
WHERE THE HELL'S THAT CHOPPER?
YOU HEAR SOMETHING?
YEAH.
HELI-COPTER. BIG ONE. DIRECTLY OVERHEAD.
GOING IN THE SAME DIRECTION WE ARE. BE LANDING IN A COUPLE OF MINUTES. BE TAKING OFF IN A COUPLE MORE, WITH A BELLY FULL OF DEATH.
YOU THINK YOU CAN HANDLE...
I DON'T KNOW. MAYBE.
11



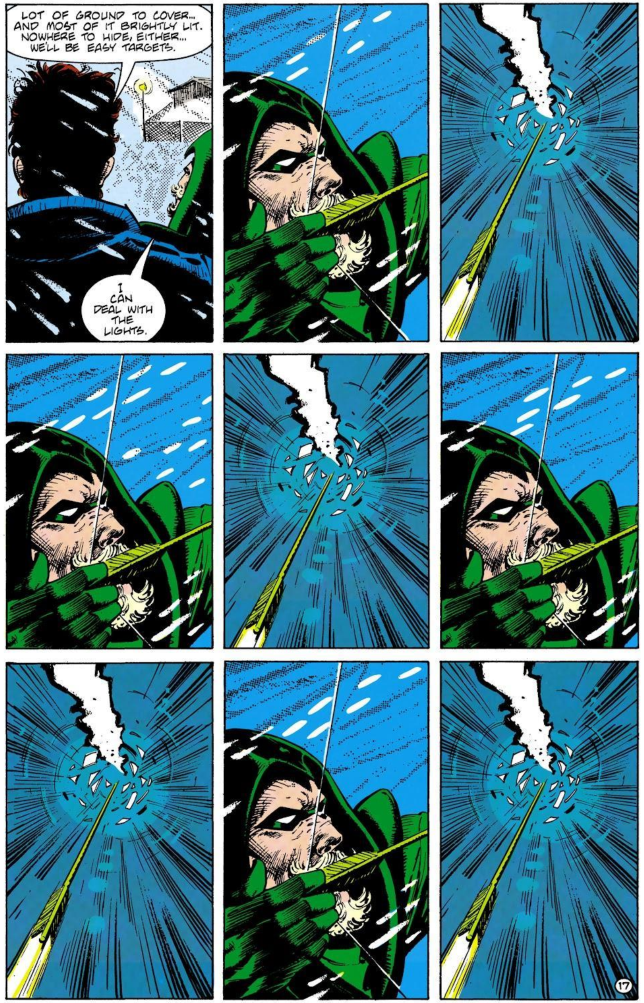
IF YOU'RE WRONG, THE TERRORISTS GET GUNS AND MORE CHILDREN DIE.
DAMN.
YOU HAVE A DECISION TO MAKE.
GIVE ME A REASON TO TRUST YOU. GIVE ME ONE DAMN REASON.
THE BAD GUYS DON'T LIKE ME.
NOT GOOD ENOUGH.
I DISARMED THE GUNMAN FOR YOU.
STILL NOT GOOD ENOUGH.
I CAN QUOTE SUN TZU.
NOT ENOUGH.
WE BOTH WEAR MASKS.
NO.
12


WE'RE ALIKE.
EXPLAIN.
YOU CALLED MY MOVE BACK AT THE HOUSE DUMB. GRANTED. BUT YOU WERE ABOUT TO PULL AN IDENTICAL STUNT BY BLUNDERING INTO CASSIDY'S CAMP.
THAT ALL?
RICHARD SAYS ENLIGHTENED PEOPLE ARE AND THE REST ARE BECOMING. I'M BECOMING.
I'M SOMEWHERE BETWEEN VIOLENCE AND TRANQUILLITY. OR BETWEEN VIOLENCE AND SOMETHING YET TO BE DECIDED.
WELL?
ME TOO.
13


YOU'RE STOPPING?
YEAH. FOR A MINUTE.
...AIN'T GOT A MINUTE, 'CAUSE WHEN THAT STORM HITS IT'LL BE KATEY-GIT-UP-AN'-BAR-THE-DOOR.
I'M NOT TAKING OFF TILL I FIND OUT WHAT'S MAKING MY LORAN ACT UP. NOT IN THIS WEATHER.
THEN GIT TO IT!
BUTCH!
THE DETECTION GEAR AT THE PERIMETER IS PICKING UP THE SOUND OF A TRUCK ENGINE.
OUR SADDLEMATES FINALLY ARRIVIN'.
WHOOPPEE TI-YI-YI--
--GIT ALONG LITTLE DOGIE.
IT'S YOUR MISFORTUNE.
--AN' NONE'A MY OWN.
14


15


REST IN PEACE, PARDS.
THEY'RE RESTING IN PIECES, BUTCH.
"HE WHO EXERCISES NO FORETHOUGHT BUT MAKES LIGHT OF HIS OPPONENT IS SURE TO BE DEFEATED BY THEM."
GOOD OLD SUN TZU. YOU THOUGHT THERE MIGHT BE MORE TO GETTING IN THAN A PASSWORD--
--AND YOU WERE RIGHT.
WONDER IF SUN TZU EVER TIED DOWN A GAS PEDAL AND AIMED AN EMPTY TRUCK?
NO... BUT HE PROBABLY DID THE EQUIVALENT WITH HORSES. HE WAS VERY BIG ON TRICKERY.
BY THE WAY, THANKS FOR CUTTING ME LOOSE. FINALLY.
ACCORDING TO SUN TZU, WE'RE ON *FACILE GROUND*-- WE'VE PENETRATED INTO HOSTILE TERRITORY, BUT NOT FAR.
WHAT DOES THE GOOD MISTER SUN SUGGEST?
"ON FACILE GROUND HALT NOT."
YOU AIN'T GONNA JUST *LEAVE* US?
YOU HAVE A REAL TALENT FOR BEING WRONG.
AND YOU BETTER PRAY WE BEAT YOUR BOSS. FAST. 'CAUSE IF WE DON'T, YOU'LL BOTH BE POPSICLES BY MORNING.
16

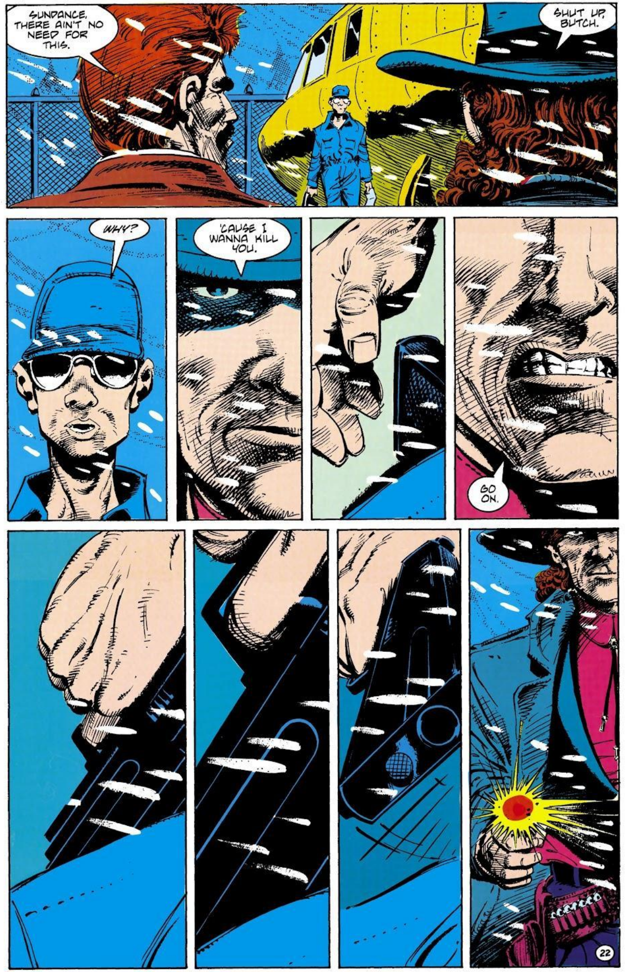

LOT OF GROUND TO COVER... AND MOST OF IT BRIGHTLY LIT. NOWHERE TO HIDE, EITHER... WE'LL BE EASY TARGETS.
I CAN DEAL WITH THE LIGHTS.
17


NICE. I WOULD HAVE SWORN YOU WEREN'T AIMING.
I WASN'T-- AT LEAST NOT THE WAY YOU MEAN "AIM." I JUST PUT THE ARROW IN PLACE AND LET THE SHOT HAPPEN.
ZEN AND THE ART OF ARCHERY, HUH?
SOMETHING LIKE THAT.
DAMN IT, AIN'T YOU READY YET?
KEEP YOUR SHIRT ON. IT'LL BE ANOTHER FIVE MINUTES, NO MORE'N THAT.
BUTCH! SOMETHING PUT OUT THE LIGHTS NEAR THE ACCESS ROAD...
...AN' THE DETECTORS ARE PICKING UP VOICES.
I GOT A FEELIN' WE'RE SOMEHOW UNDER ATTACK.
SEND THE BOYS DOWN ON SNOWMOBILES. TELL 'EM TO TAKE PLENTY OF FIREPOWER.
--AND TELL 'EM TO KILL ANYTHING THAT MOVES.
COMPANY'S COMING. SUN TZU HAVE ANY ADVICE?
HE'D SAY THAT BECAUSE WE'VE PENETRATED INTO HOSTILE TERRITORY, WE'RE ON SERIOUS GROUND.
WHAT THE HELL?
18


I DON'T BELIEVE THIS... AN *ARROW*!
HGNPH!
HUNH?
19


SUN TZU SAYS THAT ON SERIOUS GROUND, YOU GATHER IN PLUNDER.
I GUESS THESE SNOW BUGGIES QUALIFY.
SINCE THERE'S NO OTHER PLUNDER AROUND--
--THEY'LL HAVE TO.
YOU COULD'VE EASILY SNUFFED THOSE THREE.
I DID KILL A MAN ONCE... A VERY *BAD* MAN.
I DIDN'T LIKE IT. NOT A BIT.
YOU READY?
I GOT THE NAVIGATIONAL GEAR FIXED, ALL RIGHT. BUT I'M NOT GOING UP.
WHY NOT?
WEATHER. BLIZZARD'S HIT FULL FORCE. BE SUICIDE TO FLY THESE MOUNTAINS IN THIS WEATHER.
GIVE HIM YOUR GUN, BUTCH. STICK IT IN HIS POCKET.
20


HEY, NOW-- LOOK...
GO FOR IT. ANY TIME YOU'RE READY.
I'M NOT GONNA FIGHT YOU--
MISTER, I GOT A KID. A TWO-YEAR-OLD--
OKAY, OKAY, I'LL FLY THE DAMN CHOPPER--
THAT AIN'T AN OPTION. NOT ANYMORE. DRAW.
21


SUNDANCE, THERE AIN'T NO NEED FOR THIS.
SHUT UP, BUTCH.
WHY?
'CAUSE I WANNA KILL YOU.
GO ON.
22


SATISFIED?
YEAH.
ANYBODY EVER TELL YOU YOU'RE LOCO?
IT'S BEEN MENTIONED.
CLIMB ABOARD, BUTCH. I'LL PILOT THIS HEAP.
I HEAR THE SNOWMOBILES COMIN'. MAYBE WE OUGHTTA WAIT FOR THE BOYS.
WHY? WE DON'T OWE 'EM ANYTHING. GET IN.
23


WHERE WOULD MISTER SUN SAY WE ARE NOW?
"GROUND ON WHICH WE CAN BE SAVED FROM DESTRUCTION ONLY BY FIGHTING WITHOUT DELAY...
"...THIS IS DESPERATE GROUND."
24


WHAT HAPPENED?
SOMETHING HIT US... COUPL'A SNOWMOBILES...
LOOK... IT'S THAT FACELESS BASTARD FROM HUB CITY--
AN' HE BROUGHT A FRIEND.
25


YOU HURT HIM... YOU LOUSY... STINKING... ROTTEN... SCUMMY--
WHAT KIND OF GROUND WE ON NOW?
I'D SAY, GROUND-TO-A-HALT!
26



MIGHT AS WELL GET WARM. WE'RE NOT GOING ANYWHERE TILL MORNING.
I'LL COLLECT THE OTHER TWO.
YOU REMEMBER THE STORY OF HEROD? THE SLAUGHTER OF THE INNOCENTS?
FROM THE BIBLE, YEAH. I WAS THINKING THE SAME THING.
SOMETIME, IN A WEEK OR A MONTH OR TWO, A KID WILL GET ONTO AN AIRPLANE SOMEWHERE.
JFK AIRPORT
AND HE'LL REACH HIS DESTINATION.
BUT FOR NOW, AS ICE GLAZES THE MOUNTAINS AND THE WIND SCREAMS AND SNOW WHIPS AND EDDIES AND COLD SETTLES OVER THE LAND, SIX MEN HUDDLE IN A SMALL CIRCLE OF WARMTH AND TALK ALL THE NIGHT LONG OF GOOD AND EVIL...
END



ARMY OF DARKNESS
ASH 4 PREZ
JUST SAY NO!
ASH HATES DEAD TE
ASH WANTS TO KILL UR KIDS
KILL ASH 2016
3:30 PM 59°F
LIVE 48 PAGE DYNAMITE .COM
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ASHLEY J. WILLIAMS – AMERICA'S ONLY HOPE?
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MY NAME IS ASH AND I HAVE BEEN MANY THINGS...
I'VE BEEN A STORE CLERK. A MEDIEVAL KNIGHT. A PAWN IN THE BATTLE BETWEEN LIGHT AND DARKNESS.
I'VE BEEN TO HELL AND FOUGHT ALONGSIDE ANGELS.
HELL, I'VE EVEN BEEN AN ASTRONAUT!
BUT I'VE NEVER BEEN WHAT I AM RIGHT NOW...
FREAKED OUT.
THE CTHULU-IAN CANDIDATE



IN ALL THE YEARS THAT I'VE KEPT THE NECRONOMICON EX MORTIS--
--A BOOK CONTAINING ARCANE SECRETS AND THE SOUL OF A KANDARIAN DEMON--
I'VE NEVER HEARD IT SCREAMING LIKE THIS.
IT'S AS IF THE COLLECTIVE SOULS OF THE DAMNED ARE YOWLING THROUGH THAT TWISTED PIE-HOLE IT'S GOT.
AND TO BE HONEST, IT'S REALLY UNNERVING.


AAAOOOOOO*
THE PEOPLE WILL BRING DARKNESS...
...UPON THEMSELVES.
WHISKEY. TANGO. FOXTROT?
ALL THE LEGIT PSYCHICS I KNOW ARE EITHER IN THE LOONY BIN OR DEAD. LUCKILY I GOT A LINE ON THIS GAL WHO DOES MORE THAN JUST SCAM PEOPLE OUT OF THEIR PAYCHECKS BY DOING "READINGS" THAT ANYONE WITH DECENT GOOGLE SEARCH SKILLS COULD.
READINGS BY DELILAH
KNOCK KNOCK KNOCK
"READINGS BY DELILAH"? PROBABLY SOME TOOTHLESS OLD H-
HELLOOOOOO NURSE! YOU'RE DELILAH?
WELCOME, ASH. I'VE BEEN EXPECTING YOU.
CUTE. YOU'RE SUPPOSED TO SAY THAT, AREN'T YA'?
YES. ALTHOUGH I APPRECIATE YOU CALLING AHEAD--


--JUST BECAUSE I'M A MEDIUM, THAT DOESN'T MEAN YOU CAN'T SHOW GOOD ETIQUETTE.
YEAH, WELL I HOPE YOU SAW FAR ENOUGH INTO THE FUTURE TO PUT ON SOME ADULT DIAPERS-
'CUZ WHENEVER I SHOW PEOPLE THIS-
THEY LOSE THEIR
GASP!
TOLD YA' SO.
MY GRANDMOTHER TOLD ME ABOUT BOOKS LIKE THESE. THEY ARE MADE FROM THE SUFFERING OF THE INNOCENT.
TELL ME ABOUT IT.
THE HATRED EMANATING FROM IT IS--
OKAY, ENOUGH WITH THE DRAMA CLUB ACT. I NEED TO KNOW WHAT THIS THING WAS TRYING TO SAY BEFORE IT SHUT DOWN.
PSSH! IF YOU DON'T BELIEVE I'M A MEDIUM WHY COME TO ME?
DESPERATE TIMES, DOLL.
HMPH. I HEAR YOU'VE BEEN THROUGH TOO MUCH TO BE SUCH A SKEPTIC.
SO HAS AGENT SKULLY, I JUST DON'T LOOK AS GOOD IN HEELS.
POINT. SO, IT'S LAST WORDS WERE "THE PEOPLE WILL BRING DARKNESS UPON THEMSELVES", YES?

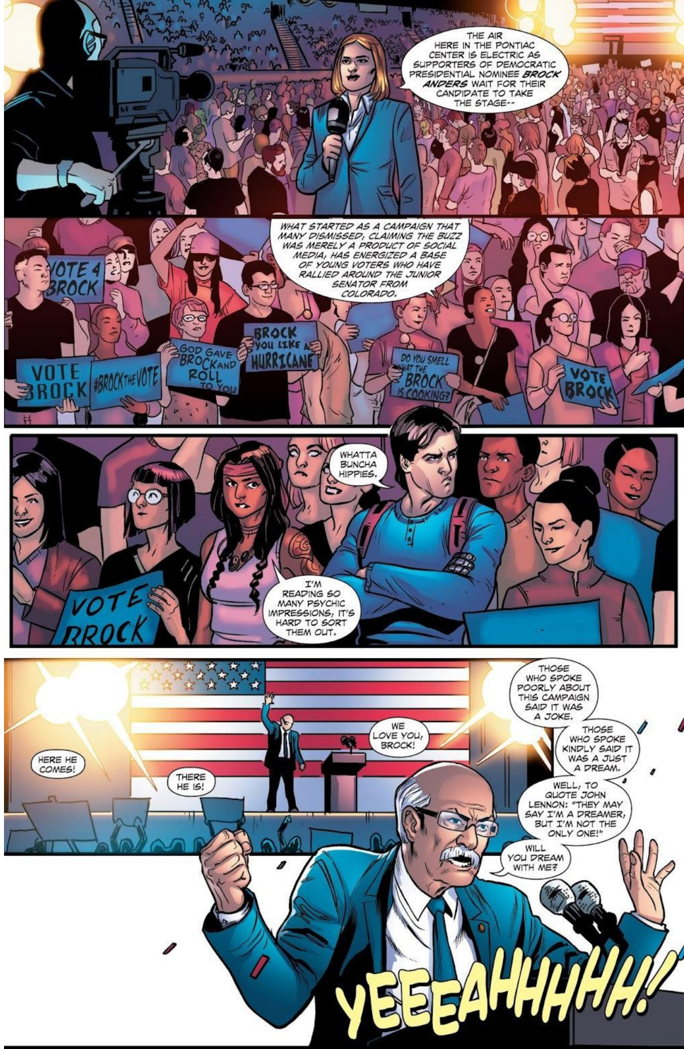

YEAH, I'VE HAD THIS THING TALK TO ME BEFORE, BUT THIS FELT--
DIFFERENT.
DON'T START DOING THAT.
SHHHHHHHH...
I CAN...SENSE THE SOUL OF THE NECRONOMICON...
...SO... FAR...AWAY... IT'S...
FLEEING.
THE PEOPLE ARE CALLING FOR DARKNESS. THEY CALL FOR THE END OF ALL THINGS. THEY CALL FOR--
HOLY--
NO. NOT HOLY. NOT SACRED. NOT OF HEAVEN--

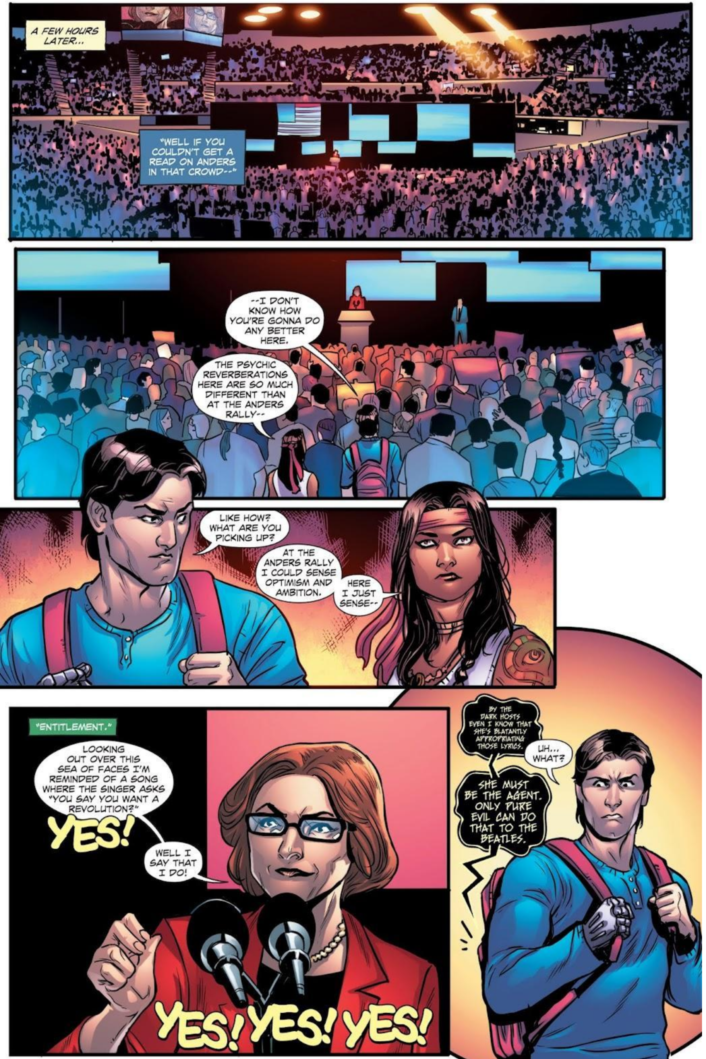

--AND NOT OF HELL. SOMETHING BEYOND THE REALM OF THE DAMNED.
BEYOND THE REALM OF ANGELS.
SOMETHING MORE EVIL THAN EVIL.
AH, I EAT EVIL FOR BREAKFAST AND CRAP IT OUT BY LUNCH.
NO. SOMETHING GREATER THAN EVIL. A DARK FORCE FAR MORE FORMIDABLE THAN ANY YOU HAVE EVER KNOWN... IT IS...
...THE GREAT DARKNESS.
SAY WHAT?
IT IS THE VOID THAT EXISTED BEFORE CREATION.
IT IS THE HUNGER THAT CONSUMES THE MULTIVERSE AT THE FRINGES OF REALITY--
IT IS THE MONSTER THAT WAS DRIVEN INTO RETREAT BY THE LIGHT--


BUT IT RETREATS NO MORE.
UH HUH. I DON'T GET IT. YOU GUYS HAVE BEEN TRYING TO KILL HUMANKIND FOR CENTURIES. THIS SOUNDS LIKE ANOTHER DEMON, JUST BIGGER.
IDIOT!
THE GREAT DARKNESS HAS STOPPED ITS RETREAT INTO THE VOID BEYOND AND WANTS TO RECLAIM WHAT IT ONCE HELD--
CONSUMING NOT ONLY ALL OF HUMANKIND, BUT THE DEMON REALMS AS WELL.
YOU DON'T SAY...
WELL...
THIS SOUNDS A LOT LIKE THE LINE YA' FED ME TO SEND ME AFTER THAT DEMON BIKER CLUB IN OKLAHOMA! YA' THINK I FORGOT ABOUT THAT!?
ONLY A COMPLETE FOOL WOULD MISTAKE THE GREAT DARKNESS FOR A BIKER GANG- OH WAIT I FORGOT WHO I WAS SPEAKING TO!
WHY I OUGHTA...
ASH! WAIT! IT TELLS THE TRUTH!
I SAW IT...ALL OF IT.
SOMETHING HORRIBLE IS COMING. FOR EVERYONE.


FINE THEN, BUT WHERE DO WE EVEN START TAKING THIS THING ON?
WHERE DO I FIND IT?
I MEAN, IT'S NOT LIKE IT'S JUST GONNA COME KNOCKING ON OUR...
CHK
...FRONT DOOR?
--POLLS NATIONWIDE SHOW THIS IS AN ELECTION THAT IS TOO CLOSE TO CALL--
--WITH REPUBLICAN NOMINEE VALERIE SEXTON HOLDING ON TO A SLIM LEAD IN MOST POLLS--
--HER CHALLENGER DEMOCRATIC NOMINEE BROCK ANDERS IS GAINING A FOOTHOLD IN THE MIDWEST.
ONE OF THOSE TWO MORTALS IS AN AGENT OF THE GREAT DARKNESS--
--SEEKING TO TAKE THIS PLANET'S GREATEST SEAT OF POWER.
YOU MUST DISCOVER WHICH ONE IT IS--
--AND YOU MUST KILL THEM.


WHOAH, WHOAH! HOLD ON A SECOND! YOU'RE SAYING I'VE GOTTA KILL A PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE? WHO AM I, TRAVIS BICKLE?
I DON'T THINK SO.
I SAW WHAT THIS THING HAS DONE, ASH. I KNOW THIS SOUNDS EXTREME-- BUT I SENSE IT'S THE TRUTH.
SORRY, DOLL, BUT I JUST CAN'T HELP FEEL LIKE I'M GETTING PLAYED HERE. THIS BOOK HAS LED ME DOWN SOME DARK PATHS BEFORE.
I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO TELL YOU, ASH.
PLUS, PRESIDENTIAL ASSASSINS DON'T GET JAIL, THEY GET THE GAS CHAMBER.
DAMMIT! I FEEL LIKE I'M PLAYING CHECKERS BUT MY OPPONENT IS PLAYING CHESS.
I KNOW YOU DON'T TRUST THE BOOK, BUT YOU CAN TRUST ME. I'M HERE TO HELP.
IF WE CAN GET CLOSE ENOUGH TO THESE PEOPLE, I CAN TRY TO DIVINE WHICH ONE IS THE AGENT OF THE GREAT DARKNESS.
...
AND THEN WHAT?
AND THEN WE'LL GO FROM THERE.
...
OKAY, HOW DO WE GET TO SEE THIS SUPPOSED "AGENT" UP CLOSE AND PERSONAL?
WELL, ACCORDING TO GNN NEWS...
...NOW THE ELECTION GOES TO THE BATTLEGROUNDS OF MICHIGAN...AND THE CITY OF DETROIT.
...IT LOOKS LIKE THEY'RE GONNA COME AND KNOCK ON OUR FRONT DOOR.


THE AIR HERE IN THE PONTIAC CENTER IS ELECTRIC AS SUPPORTERS OF DEMOCRATIC PRESIDENTIAL NOMINEE BROCK ANDERS WAIT FOR THEIR CANDIDATE TO TAKE THE STAGE--
WHAT STARTED AS A CAMPAIGN THAT MANY DISMISSED, CLAIMING THE BUZZ WAS MERELY A PRODUCT OF SOCIAL MEDIA, HAS ENERGIZED A BASE OF YOUNG VOTERS WHO HAVE RALLIED AROUND THE JUNIOR SENATOR FROM COLORADO.
VOTE 4 BROCK
VOTE BROCK
#BROCKTHEVOTE
GOD GAVE BROCK AND ROLL TO YOU
BROCK YOU LIKE A HURRICANE
DO YOU SMELL WHAT THE BROCK IS COOKING?
VOTE BROCK
WHATTA BUNCHA HIPPIES.
VOTE BROCK
I'M READING SO MANY PSYCHIC IMPRESSIONS, IT'S HARD TO SORT THEM OUT.
HERE HE COMES!
THERE HE IS!
WE LOVE YOU, BROCK!
THOSE WHO SPOKE POORLY ABOUT THIS CAMPAIGN SAID IT WAS A JOKE.
THOSE WHO SPOKE KINDLY SAID IT WAS A JUST A DREAM.
WELL, TO QUOTE JOHN LENNON: "THEY MAY SAY I'M A DREAMER, BUT I'M NOT THE ONLY ONE!"
WILL YOU DREAM WITH ME?
YEEEAHHHHH!


A FEW HOURS LATER...
"WELL IF YOU COULDN'T GET A READ ON ANDERS IN THAT CROWD--"
--I DON'T KNOW HOW YOU'RE GONNA DO ANY BETTER HERE.
THE PSYCHIC REVERBERATIONS HERE ARE SO MUCH DIFFERENT THAN AT THE ANDERS RALLY--
LIKE HOW? WHAT ARE YOU PICKING UP?
AT THE ANDERS RALLY I COULD SENSE OPTIMISM AND AMBITION.
HERE I JUST SENSE--
"ENTITLEMENT."
LOOKING OUT OVER THIS SEA OF FACES I'M REMINDED OF A SONG WHERE THE SINGER ASKS "YOU SAY YOU WANT A REVOLUTION?"
YES!
WELL I SAY THAT I DO!
YES! YES! YES!
BY THE DARK HOSTS EVEN I KNOW THAT SHE'S BLATANTLY APPROPRIATING THOSE LYRICS.
UH... WHAT?
SHE MUST BE THE AGENT. ONLY PURE EVIL CAN DO THAT TO THE BEATLES.


ANY LUCK?
NOT REALLY. THE CROWD WAS GIVING OFF SO MUCH INTERFERENCE.
YEAH, AND I'M PRETTY SURE THAT SOME ALL-POWERFUL EVIL ISN'T GOING TO JUST LET THEIR FLUNKY WALK AROUND WITHOUT SOME KIND OF PSYCHIC CAMOUFLAGE.
BACK TO SQUARE ONE.
WELL WE HAD A BETTER CHANCE OF GETTING CLOSE TO ANDERS, MAYBE IF WE--
BROCK ANDERS IS A FILTHY SOCIALIST!
OKAY BUDDY, MIND THE PERSONAL SPACE WHEN RANTING--
DON'T TREAD ON ME, VOTE TREADWAY.
AND SEXTON HAS BEEN BOUGHT BY THE CORPORATIONS! SHE DOESN'T REPRESENT YOU ANY MORE THAN ANDERS DOES!
HERE!
AND MIND THE BREATH TOO.
DON'T TREAD ON ME, VOTE TREADWAY
AMERICAN PATRIOT
COME TO THE S-MART PARKING LOT AND LISTEN TO A REAL AMERICAN WHO IS GONNA MAKE OUR COUNTRY GREAT AGAIN!
THERE'S SOMETHING YOU DON'T SEE EVERY DAY.
DON'T TREAD ON ME, VOTE TREADWAY
AMERICAN PATRIOT PARTY


IN THE S-MART PARKING LOT, WHERE THE PATRIOT PARTY IS HOLDING ITS FIRST PUBLIC RALLY...
S-Mart
I'M TELLIN' YA', FIRST THING THAT ANDERS FELLA IS GONNA DO IS TAKE ALL OUR GUNS--
DON'T TRUST THAT SEXTON WOMAN. PRETTY SURE SHE'S BACKED BY THE ILLUMINATI.
CAN'T TRUST ANYTHING YOU HEAR ABOUT THEM ON MAINSTREAM MEDIA.
OH, THIS IS RICH.
AND I SAY IT'S TIME TO BREAK THE HOLD OF THE TWO-PARTY SYSTEM--
--WITH POLITICIANS THAT ARE IN THE POCKETS OF THE CORPORATIONS AND BEING BOUGHT AND SOLD ON WALL STREET--
THERE ARE FORCES AT WORK HERE--
HUH? WHAT?
--A DARK SHADOW APPROACHES. BE WARY.
IT'S TIME TO MAKE AMERICA FREE AGAIN!
CLAP CLAP CLAP
AS YOUR CANDIDATE IN THE PATRIOT PARTY, I'LL PUT A STOP TO THE GOVERNMENT TREADING ON THE BACKS OF HARD-WORKING AMERICANS--
--AND GIVING IT AWAY TO THOSE SEEKING A HANDOUT!


IS THIS GUY FOR REAL?
HE HELPED GET THE PATRIOT PARTY ON THE BALLOT, SO I GUESS IT WORKS.
A DARK PRESENCE APPROACHES.
WHAT'S YOUR DEAL? I DON'T SEE ANYTHING APPROACHING 'CEPT FOR--
WHAT DO WE WANT?
FREE COLLEGE TUITION!
A BUNCH OF HIPPIES AND THEIR PARENTS.
WHEN DO WE WANT IT?
NOW!
WHY DON'T YOU MOVE BACK TO RUSSIA, YA' SOCIALIST!
THAT'S COMMUNISM, YOU DOPE! WHY DON'T YOU READ A BOOK?
OKAY, OKAY, HOLD ON YOU GUYS! WHY DON'T WE JUST COOL OFF AND--
WHY DON'T YOU SHUT THE F UP AND BUTT OUT!
AAAIIIEE!


WHAM
OH SON OF A B-
ASH!
YOU STUPID, DELUDED FOOLS ARE LIKE CATTLE BEING LED TO THE SLAUGHTER.
YOU CALL THE DARKNESS UPON YOURSELVES--
--NOT REALIZING YOU CALL UPON YOUR OWN D--
NOW THAT'S ENOUGH OUT OF YOU!
???
AH YES, THE SO-CALLED "VOICE OF THE REAL AMERICA."
WHAT DO YOU THINK YOUR FOLLOWERS WOULD SAY IF THEY KNEW THE TRUTH ABOUT YOU, NORMAN?
THAT YOU'VE NEVER FIRED A GUN IN YOUR LIFE?
TRUTH HURTS DON'T IT?
SNAP

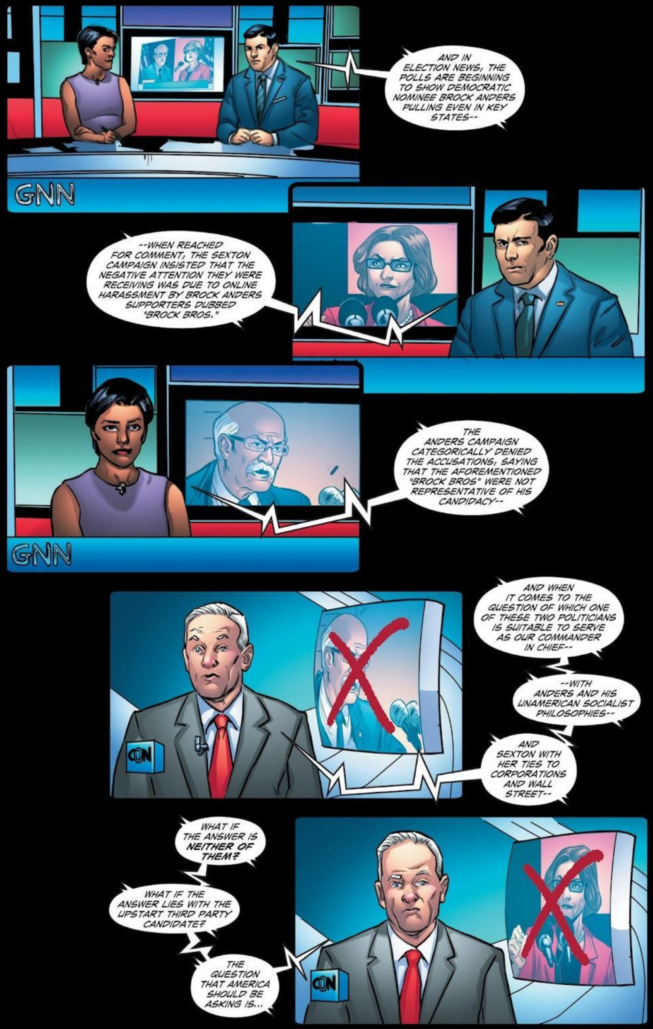

TYPICAL THIRD PARTY CANDIDATE. WASTE OF A GOOD VOTE.
WHO'S N-
BLAM
YEAH, IT'S ME. THE GOOD GUY WITH A GUN.
WHAT A SHOT!
IT WAS SELF-DEFENSE!
WASN'T THAT MURDER?
SOMEBODY CALL AN AMBULANCE!
NORMAN LET SOME UNARMED ASSAILANT BREAK HIS NECK--
I'M PRETTY SURE HE HAD A KNIFE!
THAT WAS ONE IMPRESSIVE SHOT. YOU EVER SERVE? I BET YOU HAVE. THAT WAS A SNIPER SHOT IF I'VE EVER SEEN ONE--
YEAH, UH, I'VE SEEN MY SHARE OF ACTION--


WHAT KIND OF DUMB GETS HIMSELF KILLED BY A DAMN LIBERAL?!
THE GUY GOT THE PARTY ON THE BALLOT!
CAN SOMEBODY PLEASE CALL AN AMBULANCE!?
AH YES, THE HUMAN HEART REVEALS ITS TRUE NATURE...
WHAT ARE YOU BABBLING ABOUT?
JUST WATCH.
EXCUSE ME, SIR! I WRITE FOR A WEBSITE CALLED TRUTHSEEKERS.COM AND I'D LIKE TO GET SOME WORDS FROM YOU--
WAIT! HOLD ON A SEC, I'M NOT LOOKING FOR ANY ATTENTION--
YOU EVER SEE COMBAT IN AFGHANISTAN?
EVER GO BEAR HUNTING? WE SHOULD GO HUNTING TOGETHER!
MY SISTER IS SINGLE, WANNA MEET HER?
WHY HASN'T ANYONE CALLED AN AMBULANCE?!
LOOK, BUDDY, I DON'T KNOW IF YOU REALIZE WHAT A TREMENDOUS OPPORTUNITY YOU'VE JUST LUCKED INTO--
WHAT OPPORTUNITY?
WELL, NOW THAT NORMAN LEFT US WITH A BLANK TICKET--


"DO YOU WANT TO RUN FOR PRESIDENT?"
HE REALLY ASKED YOU THAT?
YEAH. WITH TREADWAY DEAD, THEY NEED SOMEONE ON THE BALLOT PRONTO.
THEY CAN DO THAT?
APPARENTLY. AND WITH THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR THE RIGHT TO BEAR ARMS AS A MAJOR SPONSOR--
--IT MAY AS WELL BE A GUY WHO ACTUALLY KNOWS HOW TO SHOOT A GUN.
THIS MAY BE THE BREAK WE NEEDED.
REALLY? SOUNDS FAR-FETCHED TO ME.
HONESTLY, IT'S NOT LIKE YOU CAN ACTUALLY WIN, BUT IT MAY GET US CLOSER TO THE OTHER CANDIDATES.
THIS ALL SEEMS TOO PAT. A DEADITE JUST SHOWS UP TO KILL A CANDIDATE SO I CAN TAKE HIS PLACE? WHAT A COINCIDENCE.
NOT COINCIDENCE, YOU DOLT! PREORDAINED BY THE KANDARIAN LORDS WHO WISH TO SEE YOU KILL THE AGENT OF GREAT DARKNESS--
AS YOU MORTALS SAY--
THE ENEMY OF MY ENEMY IS MY FRIEND.
WE'RE NOT FRIENDS.
OF COURSE NOT HEAD. I HATE YOU.
THE FEELING IS MUTUAL, ASS-FACE.
ENOUGH YOU TWO! EVEN AS A CANDIDATE, WE STILL NEED TO FIGURE OUT A WAY TO GET YOU CLOSER TO THE--



I'VE GOT IT! YOU GET INVITED TO THE NEXT DEBATE!
NO WAY, NO HOW!
YOU'RE THE ONLY OTHER CANDIDATE ON THE TICKET WITH ANY CAMPAIGN BACKING. WE MAKE ENOUGH NOISE, THEY'LL HAVE TO LET YOU GET ON THAT STAGE!
UGH. I SUCKED AT DEBATES. I FLUNKED DEBATE CLASS IN HIGH SCHOOL! I'LL GET EATEN ALIVE.
YOUR INTENT WON'T BE TO DEBATE, BUT TO CAST A SPELL OF REVELATION WHEN YOU ARE CLOSE TO THE AGENT AND SHOW THEIR TRUE FACE TO THE WORLD.
AS FOR "MAKING ENOUGH NOISE"? JUST LISTEN TO ME--
I KNOW WHAT THINGS THE HUMAN HEART LONGS TO HEAR.
WELL...
IT LOOKS LIKE MRS. WILLIAMS' BABY BOY IS RUNNING FOR PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES.



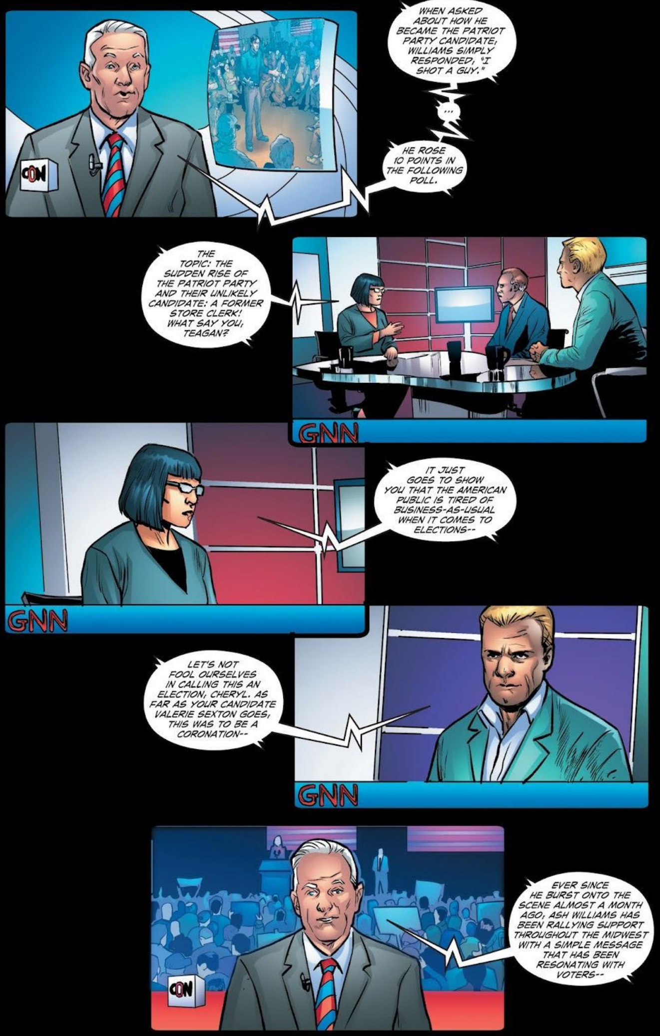
AND IN ELECTION NEWS, THE POLLS ARE BEGINNING TO SHOW DEMOCRATIC NOMINEE BROCK ANDERS PULLING EVEN IN KEY STATES--
GNN
--WHEN REACHED FOR COMMENT, THE SEXTON CAMPAIGN INSISTED THAT THE NEGATIVE ATTENTION THEY WERE RECEIVING WAS DUE TO ONLINE HARASSMENT BY BROCK ANDERS SUPPORTERS DUBBED "BROCK BROS."
THE ANDERS CAMPAIGN CATEGORICALLY DENIED THE ACCUSATIONS, SAYING THAT THE AFOREMENTIONED "BROCK BROS" WERE NOT REPRESENTATIVE OF HIS CANDIDACY--
GNN
AND WHEN IT COMES TO THE QUESTION OF WHICH ONE OF THESE TWO POLITICIANS IS SUITABLE TO SERVE AS OUR COMMANDER IN CHIEF--
--WITH ANDERS AND HIS UNAMERICAN SOCIALIST PHILOSOPHIES--
AND SEXTON WITH HER TIES TO CORPORATIONS AND WALL STREET--
WHAT IF THE ANSWER IS NEITHER OF THEM?
WHAT IF THE ANSWER LIES WITH THE UPSTART THIRD PARTY CANDIDATE?
THE QUESTION THAT AMERICA SHOULD BE ASKING IS...


"...WHO IS ASH WILLIAMS?"
AT THE NEXT PATRIOT PARTY RALLY...
SO IF YOU ASK ME, THE JOB OF PRESIDENT SHOULDN'T GO TO THE PERSON WHO WANTS IT THE MOST--
ASH FOR PRESIDENT
--BECAUSE IF THEY WANT TO BE PRESIDENT--THEY--
--I MEAN IF THEY ARE CAPABLE OF BECOMING PRESIDENT--
--THEY SHOULDN'T BE ALLOWED TO DO THE JOB.
THIS IS THE GUY NEAL DEVITO ON CON NEWS SAID LOOK OUT FOR!
WHO IS THIS GUY?
LOSER DOESN'T EVEN WANT TO BE PRESIDENT. WHY IS HE RUNNING?
NO WAIT! THAT'S NOT WHAT I MEANT!
I DON'T GET IT, THAT LINE WORKED FOR DOUGLAS ADAMS.
I'M PRETTY SURE HE DIDN'T SAY IT THAT WAY.
RUB IT IN, WHY DON'T YOU?
YOU SHOULD BE QUOTING JOHN ADAMS, NOT DOUGLAS, YOU IMBECILE!

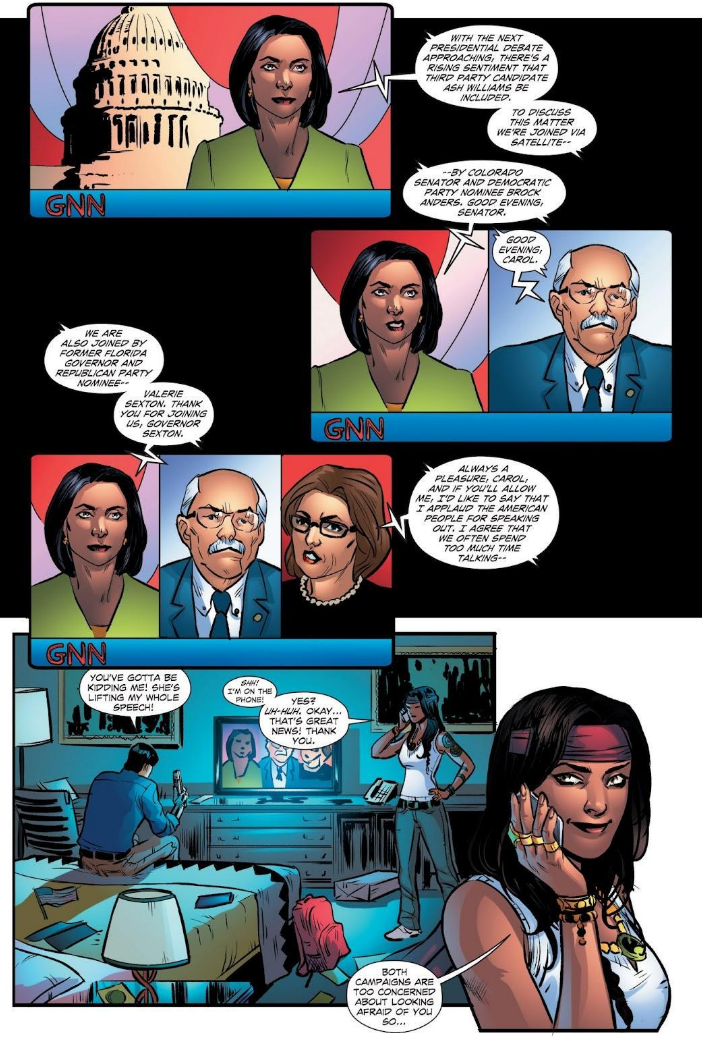

BACK AT DELILAH'S PLACE...
TOLD YA' I WASN'T GREAT WITH WORDS.
STOP BEING SO HARD ON YOURSELF, ASH.
STOP CODDLING HIM!
I TOLD YOU TO LISTEN TO ME!
HEY WAIT, I--
YOU DIDN'T LISTEN! I TOLD YOU WHAT TO SAY AND YOU DECIDED TO TRY AND APPEAL TO THE MASSES AND THEIR HIGHER NATURE--
--WELL THE TRUTH IS--
THE MASSES HAVE NO HIGHER NATURE.
THERE ARE THOSE WHO WOULD DIVIDE US, AND TURN US AGAINST EACH OTHER. I AM HERE TO UNITE US AGAINST THOSE WHO WOULD DIVIDE US!
WHAT THE--
DID SHE JUST SAY "I'LL UNITE US AGAINST" OTHERS...
ISN'T THAT...UH... DIVIDING?
AND HERE YOU HAVE THE SOCIALIST BROCK ANDERS WHO IS PROMISING ALL THESE COLLEGE KIDS FREE TUITION--
--AND NEVER SAYS HOW HE'S GONNA PAY FOR IT! HEY, I WANNA PONY! WHO'S GONNA PAY FOR THAT?


THE CANDIDATES. THE MEDIA. NONE OF IT MAKES SENSE. IT'S LIKE THEY SAY ANYTHING THEY WANT.
PEOPLE ARE SHEEP. THEY PREFER THE LIE OVER THE TRUTH.
DON'T SAY THAT. PEOPLE ARE SMARTER THAN THAT.
I'LL MAKE YOU A WAGER. SAY WHAT I TELL YOU TO SAY AT YOUR NEXT STOP. IF IT DOESN'T WORK--
"I'LL REMAIN SILENT."
NEXT CAMPAIGN STOP: THE LOCAL VFW #124 IN ANN ARBOR, MICHIGAN.
AND AS THE NOMINEE FOR THE PATRIOT PARTY, IF ELECTED PRESIDENT I PROMISE TO LOOK AFTER YOUR GOD-GIVEN RIGHTS AS GRANTED BY THE CONSTITUTION!
Ash!
WHEN THE TIME COMES I HOPE THAT I CAN COUNT ON YOUR VOTE TO--
DOES HE EVEN LISTEN TO HIMSELF?
--HOLD ON A SECOND, SON. YOU SURE HAVE A WAY WITH WORDS. BUT THAT'S ALL IT SOUNDS LIKE...WORDS. YOU DON'T EVEN SOUND LIKE YOU BELIEVE IT YOURSELF.
SO WHAT YOU'RE SAYING IS--
DON'T BULLS▮▮T A BULLS▮▮▮▮ER, HUH?
DAMN RIGHT THAT'S WHAT I'M SAYING.


WE GET A LOT OF FOLKS COME IN HERE AND SAY STUFF AND BLOW SMOKE UP OUR SHORTS--
SO LET ME ASK YOU: WHAT MAKES YOU SO DIFFERENT?
YOU KNOW, YOU'RE RIGHT. THESE DAYS EVERYBODY SPENDS ALL THEIR TIME TALKING, AND NOT ENOUGH DOING.
I KNOW WHAT IT'S LIKE HAVING TO DEAL WITH OTHER PEOPLE AND THE--UH--WORDS THEY USE.
JUST LIKE YOU I'VE HAD TO PAY A PRICE.
I'VE LOST PEOPLE I LOVED BECAUSE TOO MANY PEOPLE SPENT THEIR TIME TRYING TO FIGURE OUT A PROBLEM INSTEAD OF DOING WHAT THEY SHOULD HAVE DONE IN THE FIRST PLACE--
WALK UP TO THE PROBLEM AND PUNCH IT IN THE F▮▮▮ING FACE!
YOU KEEP TALKING LIKE THIS, AND YOU'VE GOT MY VOTE.
VFW
IN AN UNPRECEDENTED SURGE IN THE POLLS, PATRIOT PARTY CANDIDATE ASH WILLIAMS IS MAKING SOME NOISE IN THIS ELECTION--
HIS MATTER-OF-FACT MANNER IS APPEALING TO VOTERS WHO ARE TIRED OF BEING SPOKEN DOWN TO BY POLITICIANS.
AND IT APPEARS TO NOT MATTER WHAT HE SAYS--
GNN


WHEN ASKED ABOUT HOW HE BECAME THE PATRIOT PARTY CANDIDATE, WILLIAMS SIMPLY RESPONDED, "I SHOT A GUY."
...
HE ROSE 10 POINTS IN THE FOLLOWING POLL.
THE TOPIC: THE SUDDEN RISE OF THE PATRIOT PARTY AND THEIR UNLIKELY CANDIDATE: A FORMER STORE CLERK! WHAT SAY YOU, TEAGAN?
GNN
IT JUST GOES TO SHOW YOU THAT THE AMERICAN PUBLIC IS TIRED OF BUSINESS-AS-USUAL WHEN IT COMES TO ELECTIONS--
GNN
LET'S NOT FOOL OURSELVES IN CALLING THIS AN ELECTION, CHERYL. AS FAR AS YOUR CANDIDATE VALERIE SEXTON GOES, THIS WAS TO BE A CORONATION--
GNN
EVER SINCE HE BURST ONTO THE SCENE ALMOST A MONTH AGO, ASH WILLIAMS HAS BEEN RALLYING SUPPORT THROUGHOUT THE MIDWEST WITH A SIMPLE MESSAGE THAT HAS BEEN RESONATING WITH VOTERS--


AMERICAN PATRIOT PARTY
GRAB YOUR BOOMSTICK
VOTE WILLIAMS
"STOP TALKING. START DOING."
YEAH, BABY! THANK YOU, MICHIGAN!
THEY TRIED TO IGNORE US! THEY CAN'T ANYMORE!
WE LOVE YOU, ASH!
LET'S KICK SOME ASH!
DIDN'T HE KILL SOMEONE?
SHUT UP! SECURITY, GET THIS GUY OUT OF HERE!
GOODNESS. ASH SEEMS SO... DIFFERENT.
ASH!
HE'S TASTING THE SEDUCTIVE FLAVORS OF POWER--
IT HAS SEDUCED THE BEST OF MEN, THE PUREST OF HEARTS.
ASH IS NO DIFFERENT.
WE'RE GONNA GO TO WASHINGTON AND WE'RE GONNA KICK SOME ASH!
YEEEAHHHHH!

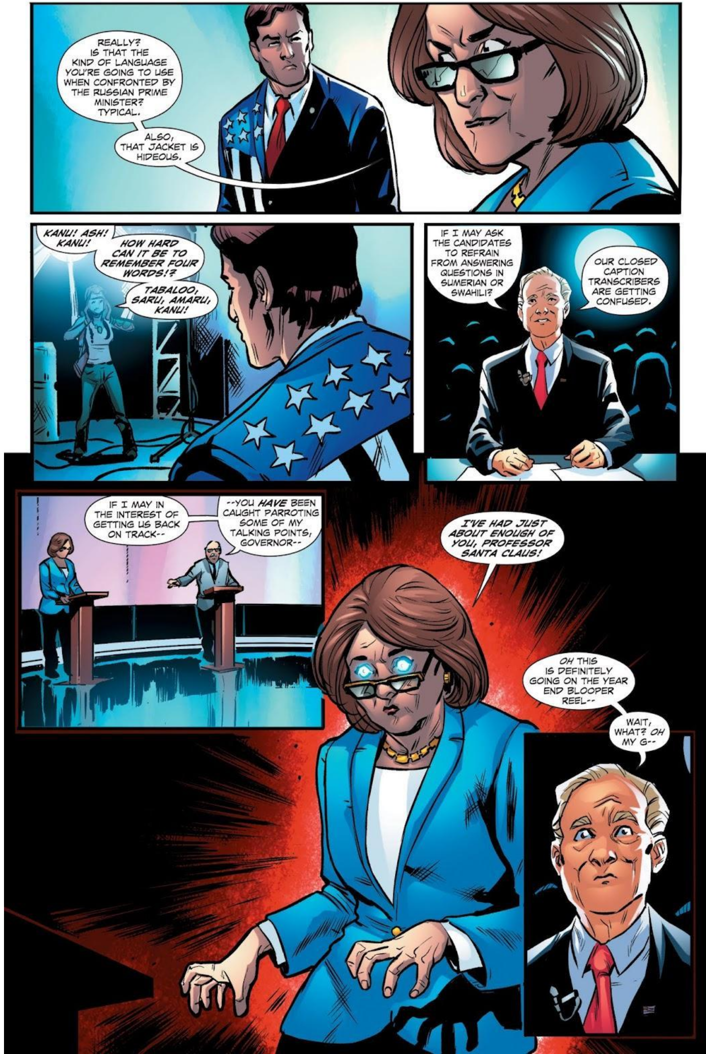

GNN
WITH THE NEXT PRESIDENTIAL DEBATE APPROACHING, THERE'S A RISING SENTIMENT THAT THIRD PARTY CANDIDATE ASH WILLIAMS BE INCLUDED.
TO DISCUSS THIS MATTER WE'RE JOINED VIA SATELLITE--
--BY COLORADO SENATOR AND DEMOCRATIC PARTY NOMINEE BROCK ANDERS. GOOD EVENING, SENATOR.
GOOD EVENING, CAROL.
GNN
WE ARE ALSO JOINED BY FORMER FLORIDA GOVERNOR AND REPUBLICAN PARTY NOMINEE--
VALERIE SEXTON. THANK YOU FOR JOINING US, GOVERNOR SEXTON.
ALWAYS A PLEASURE, CAROL, AND IF YOU'LL ALLOW ME, I'D LIKE TO SAY THAT I APPLAUD THE AMERICAN PEOPLE FOR SPEAKING OUT. I AGREE THAT WE OFTEN SPEND TOO MUCH TIME TALKING--
GNN
YOU'VE GOTTA BE KIDDING ME! SHE'S LIFTING MY WHOLE SPEECH!
SHH! I'M ON THE PHONE!
YES? UH-HUH, OKAY... THAT'S GREAT NEWS! THANK YOU.
BOTH CAMPAIGNS ARE TOO CONCERNED ABOUT LOOKING AFRAID OF YOU SO...


"YOU'RE INVITED TO THE LAST DEBATE BEFORE THE ELECTION!"
THE FOLLOWING DAY...
CNN
MR. WILLIAMS, I'M SURE YOU KNOW SENATOR ANDERS.
GOOD TO MEET YA', SENATOR.
LIKEWISE, MR. WILLIAMS. YOU'RE A GREAT SPEAKER. I LOOK FORWARD TO HEARING YOU ON THE STAGE.
AND GOVERNOR SEXTON...
THANKS FOR THE OPPORTUNITY, GOVERNOR.
WELCOME TO THE BIG LEAGUES, MR. WILLIAMS.
ENJOY YOUR CUP OF COFFEE...
...AND DON'T LET THE DOOR HIT YOU ON THE ASS.
I'M A FEMINIST AND EVEN I DON'T LIKE HER.
THIS DAY JUST KEEPS GETTING BETTER.
GRAB YOUR JACKET, ASH--


"--IT'S SHOWTIME."
LIVE FROM THE STUDIOS IN ATLANTA GEORGIA, IT'S THE FINAL GNN PRESIDENTIAL DEBATE!
SEXTON MOVED SO FAST BACKSTAGE, ASH NEVER GOT A CHANCE TO RECITE THE SPELL.
NO MATTER, HE NEEDS TO REVEAL THE AGENT OF THE GREAT DARKNESS TO THE WORLD. IF IT HAPPENS, IT HAPPENS ON THE STAGE IN FRONT OF THE CAMERAS.
PROVIDED HE DOESN'T FORGET THE WORDS.
AGAIN.
OKAY, ASH, NO SENSE IN WASTING TIME. YOU'RE CLOSE ENOUGH SO WHEN THEY CALL ON YOU JUST SAY THE WORDS--
--JUST LIKE YOU WROTE THEM DOWN.
AS IF I WAS GONNA SCREW THIS SORT OF THING UP.
AGAIN.


WELCOME LADIES AND GENTLEMEN TO THIS DEBATE, THE RULES WERE DISCUSSED AND AGREED TO BACKSTAGE--
THE FIRST QUESTION IS FOR MR. WILLIAMS--
MR. WILLIAMS, YOU'VE BEEN PROMOTING YOURSELF ON A PLATFORM OF ACTION OVER NEGOTIATION-- HOW DO YOU, A FORMER STORE CLERK WITH NO POLITICAL EXPERIENCE, EXPECT TO GET PEOPLE TO WORK WITH YOU?
WELL, I WOULDN'T SAY THAT I'M AGAINST NEGOTIATION; IT'S JUST THAT WASHINGTON GETS ALL CAUGHT UP IN--
I'M SORRY, BUT DID I JUST HEAR YOU CORRECTLY? YOU'RE NOW SAYING THAT YOU'RE FOR NEGOTIATION? THAT COMES AS NEWS TO ME!
FOR THE LAST MONTH THE AMERICAN PEOPLE HAVE BEEN FED A LINE THAT YOU'RE GOING TO "GET THINGS DONE" AS IF YOU CAN JUST GET EVERYONE TOGETHER IN A CIRCLE TO SING CAMP SONGS.
LOOK, LADY, I'M NOT THE ONE WHO'S LIFTING LINES FROM MY OPPONENT'S CAMPAIGN!
WHAT? HOW DARE YOU INSINUATE--


WHY IS HE LETTING HIMSELF GET DRAWN INTO THIS?
JUST SAY THE WORDS, ASH!
"SAY THE WORDS!"
I'VE HAD TO ENDURE SOME OF THE MOST BASELESS ACCUSATIONS--
SWEATY PALM SMUDGED THE WORDS!
TABALOO... SARU... AMARU...
I'M SORRY, DID YOU SAY SOMETHING?
UH...
HAKUNA MATATA?


REALLY? IS THAT THE KIND OF LANGUAGE YOU'RE GOING TO USE WHEN CONFRONTED BY THE RUSSIAN PRIME MINISTER? TYPICAL.
ALSO, THAT JACKET IS HIDEOUS.
KANU! ASH! KANU!
HOW HARD CAN IT BE TO REMEMBER FOUR WORDS!?
TABALOO, SARU, AMARU, KANU!
IF I MAY ASK THE CANDIDATES TO REFRAIN FROM ANSWERING QUESTIONS IN SUMERIAN OR SWAHILI?
OUR CLOSED CAPTION TRANSCRIBERS ARE GETTING CONFUSED.
IF I MAY IN THE INTEREST OF GETTING US BACK ON TRACK--
--YOU HAVE BEEN CAUGHT PARROTING SOME OF MY TALKING POINTS, GOVERNOR--
I'VE HAD JUST ABOUT ENOUGH OF YOU, PROFESSOR SANTA CLAUS!
OH THIS IS DEFINITELY GOING ON THE YEAR END BLOOPER REEL--
WAIT, WHAT? OH MY G--

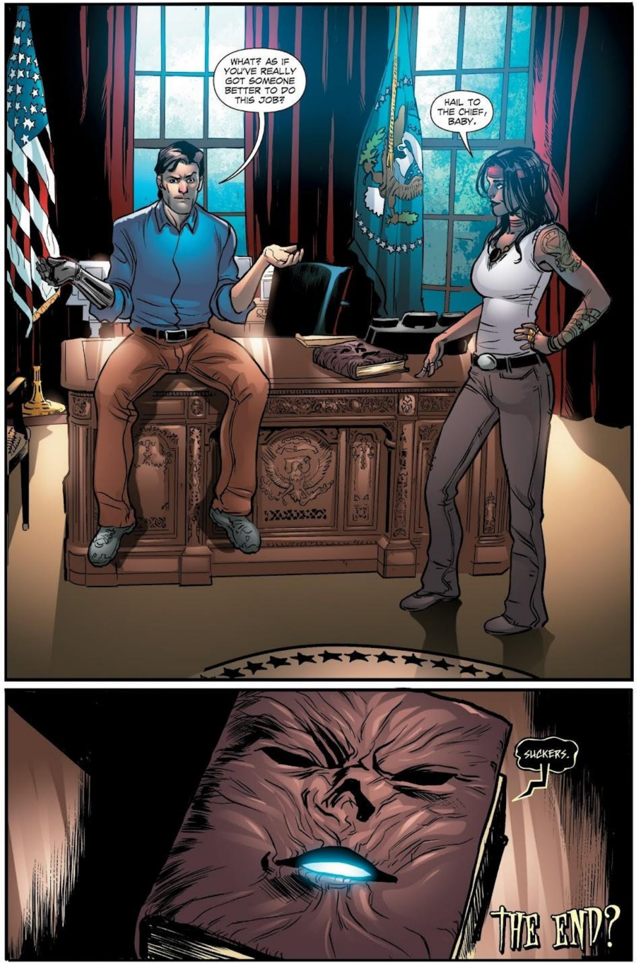

TIME FOR TALK HAS ENDED! NOW IT'S TIME TO DIE!
YEAH, I KNEW NOBODY HUMAN COULD BE THAT BITCHY.
THAT HUMAN COW MAY HAVE REVEALED MY FACE TO THE WORLD BUT NO MATTER! I WILL BEND IT TO MY WILL!
YOU THINK YOU CAN STAND AGAINST AN AGENT OF THE GREAT DARKNESS?
AAGH!
SHUNK
STAY BEHIND ME, ANDERS, THIS IS WHERE THE CRAP HITS THE FAN AND WE ALL GET TO FEEL THE BREEZE!


WHAT IN THE BLUE HELL IS GOING ON HERE!?
FOR ME IT'S SAME S DIFFERENT DAY, CHUMLY.
WHAT!?
OPEN YOUR EYES, PROFESSOR! YOUR OPPONENT WAS A PAWN OF ULTIMATE EVIL!
I DON'T UNDERSTAND...
OF COURSE, YOUR JOE COLLEGE BRAIN IS TOO SQUARE TO UNDERSTAND COMPLEX SPELLS AND INCANTATIONS--
YOUR SOULS WILL BE FLAYED BEFORE BEING CAST INTO THE VOID! YOUR CRIES FOR MERCY WILL ECHO IN THE DARKNESS UNHEARD!
I'M NOT SURE THAT I LIKED HER BETTER BEFORE--
YOU'VE BEEN CAMPAIGNING AGAINST AN AGENT OF THE GREAT DARKNESS!
SHE JUST SHOWED HER TRUE COLORS WHEN I RECITED THE SPELL--
A SPELL?
NOW YOU'RE CATCHING ON, FOUR EYES!
I SAID THE WORDS "TABALOO, SARU, AMARU, KANU".
WELL, TECHNICALLY DELILAH DID...
...AND IT REVEALED HER TRUE FORM--


--THAT OF A SHE-BITCH DEMONESS TRYING TO BECOME THE MOST POWERFUL PERSON ON THE PLANET VIA DEMOCRACY!
AW COME ON, REALLY?!
LOOK WHO'S CATCHING ON NOW, DUMBASS!
WHAM
YOU'RE GOING TO MAKE AN EXCELLENT PAPER WEIGHT ON MY DESK IN THE OVAL OFFICE, KENT.
NO-SPIN ZONE MY @$$
DELILAH BABY, YOU ARE A SIGHT FOR SORE EYES.
THEY WOULDN'T LET ME BRING IN YOUR BOOMSTICK, BUT A CHAINSAW? GO FIGURE.
YO, SHE-BITCH AND HE-BITCH!
RENNNNNENENENENENENNNNN


LET'S DANCE.
NOW YOU TWO EVIL ASS CLOWNS ARE ON MY TURF!
AAAIIIIEEEE-GLUCK!
SHUNK
HERE'S A POLL YOU'RE GONNA LOVE, GOVERNOR!
LOOKS LIKE YOU FINALLY GOT AHEAD, SENATOR!
SHLUCK
OH MY GOD, ASH! YOU DID IT!
YEAH, I JUST KILLED TWO PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES ON NATIONAL TELEVISION.
THEY WERE DEMONS, ASH!
AND THAT, AS THEY SAY, IS THAT.
SURE BUT... WHAT'S GONNA HAPPEN TO ME NEXT?


IN A SEQUENCE OF EVENTS THAT CAN ONLY BE DESCRIBED AS STUNNING, PATRIOT PARTY CANDIDATE ASHLEY J. WILLIAMS HAS BEEN ELECTED PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES.
THIS DESPITE-- OR SOME WOULD SAY BECAUSE--HE ALLEGEDLY KILLED THE TWO OTHER CANDIDATES WHO WERE REVEALED TO BE DEMONIC CREATURES OF UNDETERMINED ORIGIN, ALL WHILE THE WORLD WATCHED ON THEIR TELEVISIONS--
GNN
WHO WILL PRESIDENT ASH WILLIAMS NAME FOR HIS CABINET?
WORD IS HE ALREADY APPOINTED A PSYCHIC MEDIUM AS CHIEF OF STAFF.
DIDN'T HE KILL A GUY?
HE KILLED A LOT OF PEOPLE, MARK.
AMERICAN PATRIOT PARTY
CON
NOT SINCE A VICE-PRESIDENT SHOT A FELLOW HUNTER IN THE FACE HAS THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR THE RIGHT TO BEAR ARMS BEEN SO DELIGHTED TO HAVE A CANDIDATE IN OFFICE!
IT'S BEING CALLED A NEW ERA IN AMERICAN POLITICS, WHERE THE COMMON MAN WILL FINALLY HAVE A VOICE IN THE HALLS OF POWER.
DOES THE OATH COUNT IF YOU PUT A PROSTHETIC HAND ON THE BIBLE?
HE USED HIS LEFT HAND.
IS THAT CONSTITUTIONAL?
STOP ASKING STUPID QUESTIONS, MARK.


WHAT? AS IF YOU'VE REALLY GOT SOMEONE BETTER TO DO THIS JOB?
HAIL TO THE CHIEF, BABY.
SUCKERS.
THE END?

DYNAMITE® DISPATCH AUGUST 2016



COMING SOON

You're Xena the Warrior Princess and your thousand strong army has fallen to an implacable and ancient evil. What do you do? You suck it up and summon the only ally who stands any hope at all of helping you prevent the end of the world. Unfortunately, that lone man is the wise ass, ass kicking, time traveling, woman kissing, boom sticker known as Ash!

DYNAMITE CREATORS SPEAK!

WHAT'S THE SKINNY ON DYNAMITE'S OCTOBER RELEASES?

Erik Mona, Writer of PATHFINDER: WORLDSCAPE:
"*Pathfinder: Worldscape* teams up the Pathfinder heroes with the adventure fiction legends that inspired fantasy roleplaying games in the first place. From Robert E. Howard's Red Sonja to Edgar Rice Burroughs's John Carter, Tars Tarkas, and Tarzan, to Frank Frazetta's lost-world hero Thun'da, Pathfinder: Worldscape presents a sword-and-sorcery super-team unlike anything we've seen before. The series brings all of these heroes - and many of their darkest villains - to a mysterious dimension of warriors and wizards that allows us to explore the origins and impact of some of fantasy's most influential characters."

Amy Chu, Writer of KISS
"KISS is iconic. Legendary. It's global and cross-generational. So much has been done before with KISS in comics, a LOT of fun and crazy stuff, so for this series, I thought, why not go more serious? For research, I hunkered down and listened to the 1981 album *Music from The Elder* several times. Like the movie *Blade Runner* which came out around the same time, people didn't know what to make of it. If that album came out now, I think it would be an entirely different reception. So this storyline is more focused on mythology, heroism, and legend, and inspired by themes, lyrics, and song titles from that album."

Roger Langridge, Writer of BETTY BOOP:
"I remember seeing old Max Fleischer *Betty Boop* cartoons on TV when I was a kid and being fascinated by their decidedly non-Disney viewpoint. They existed in a seedy, fallen world, full of speak-easies, ghastly monsters from nightmares, sexual tension, and lots of hot, hot jazz - heady, exotic stuff to a kid in suburban New Zealand in the 1970s. It must have left a strong impression, because it's a world I've tried to recreate in my own comics a number of times over the years, most particularly in my own creator-owned series Fred the Clown - so it's genuinely exciting to be able to go right to the source, writing the real deal. And I'm particularly pleased that we've got a woman cartoonist drawing this major female icon, in the form of the very talented Gisèle Lagacé; Betty Boop, as was common at the time, was created as a male's fantasy idea of a woman, so I think it's important in this day and age to have a female point-of-view right at the creative coalface."

Andy Diggle, Writer of JAMES BOND: HAMMERHEAD:
"I have never been more thrilled to take charge of a character. James Bond has been with me from childhood, and his influence runs through almost everything I've ever written. Like all truly iconic characters, Bond remains timeless, reinventing himself for each new generation while remaining true to the core of Ian Fleming's original creation. By bringing the Bond of the novels into the present-day world, with all its challenges and complexities, we get the best of both worlds - Fleming's dispassionate "blunt instrument" in a post-Cold War landscape of mass surveillance, drone strikes and WMDs."

Scott Lobdell, Writer of ARMY OF DARKNESS / XENA: WARRIOR PRINCESS:
"In this story of the first jilted lover in the history of Mankind, where we learn about the third wheel who was left behind when Adam and Eve got booted out of the Garden of Eden, we see an army of the undead that is so huge that only the implacability of both Xena and Ash could hope to stop them! This is an epic tale of horror, time travel, friendships that last a century, action, and comedy all wrapped into a big-ass honking story that stars both characters front row and center."

HIGHLIGHTED ITEMS | AUGUST



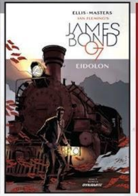
Army of Darkness: Ash For President One-Shot
written by Elliott Serrano!



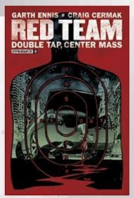
Battlestar Galactica (Classic) #1
written by Cullen Bunn!



Evil Ernie: Godeater #1
written by Justin Jordan!
(bonus Chaos backup story)

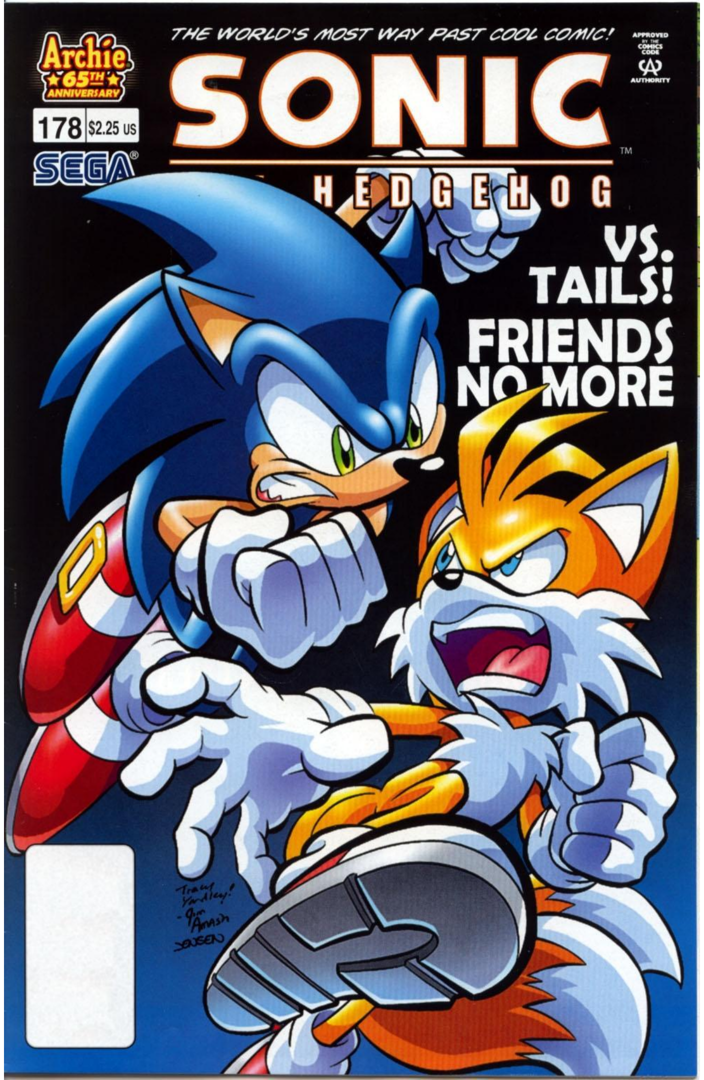


James Bond #9
written by Warren Ellis!
Eidolon part 3



Red Team: Double Tap, Center Mass #2
written by Garth Ennis!

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SONIC
HEDGEHOG
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
VS. TAILS!
FRIENDS NO MORE


HOUSE OF CARDS
Part 1 of 2!
THIS WAY TO CASTLE ACORN! THE KING WILL HEAR OUR VOICES! AND WE WILL HAVE OUR FREEDOM!
Writer-IAN FLYNN • Pencils-TRACY YARDLEY! Inks-JIM AMASH • Letters-John Workman Colors-JASON JENSEN • Editor-MIKE PELLERITO Managing Editor- VICTOR GORELICK Editor-in-Chief-RICHARD GOLDWATER
Special thanks to ROBERT LEFFLER, DYNA LOPEZ and CINDY CHAU at SEGA Licensing
AMADEUS PROWER Former Royal General
ROSEMARY PROWER Activist and Writer
MILES "TAILS" PROWER Son of Revolutionaries
NICOLE Holographic Construct
SONIC THE HEDGEHOG Stuck in the middle again
KING ELIAS ACORN Boy-King of New Mobotropolis

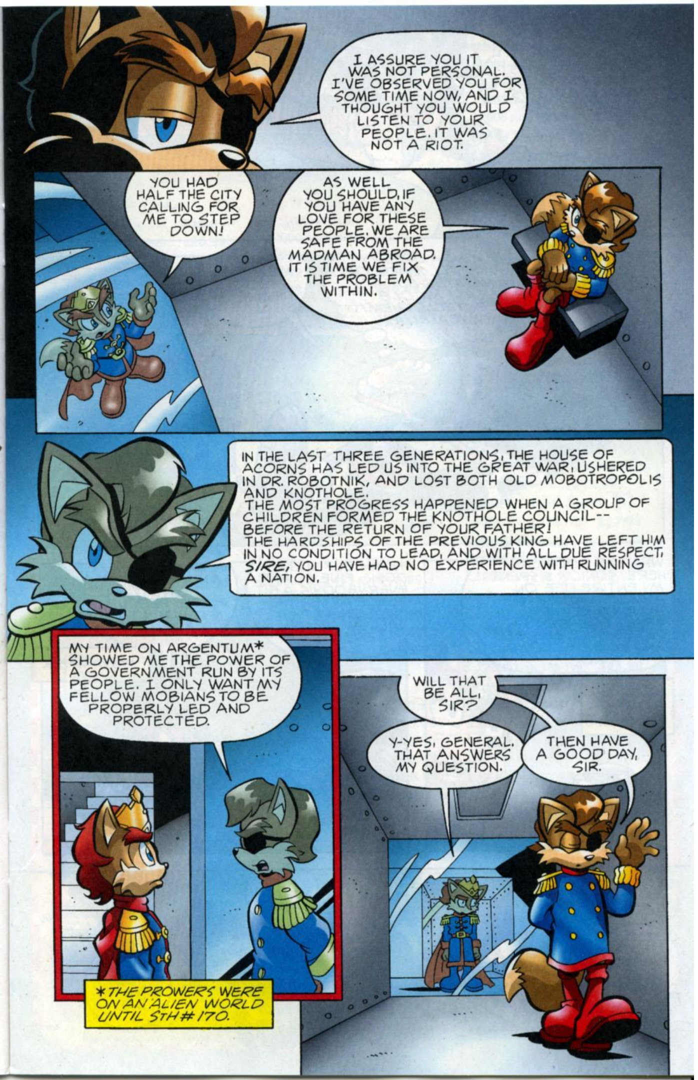

THIS WAS OUTSIDE THE CIVIC CENTER NOT LONG AGO. I'M VERY SORRY, TAILS, MRS. PROWER. I WANTED YOU TO HEAR IT FROM ME FIRST.
BUT WHY? WHY WOULD DAD DO THIS NOW?
WE THOUGHT THE TIME WAS RIGHT, TAILS. WE'RE SAFE FROM DOCTOR EGGMAN HERE, SO NOW WOULD BE THE BEST TIME FOR CHANGE.
YEAH, BUT YOU DON'T GET THAT WITH AN ANGRY MOB. SERIOUSLY, I THOUGHT THIS GUY WAS A TACTICIAN.
LET'S GET YOU OUTSIDE, MY LOVE. A BIT OF AIR WILL HELP US BOTH.
?

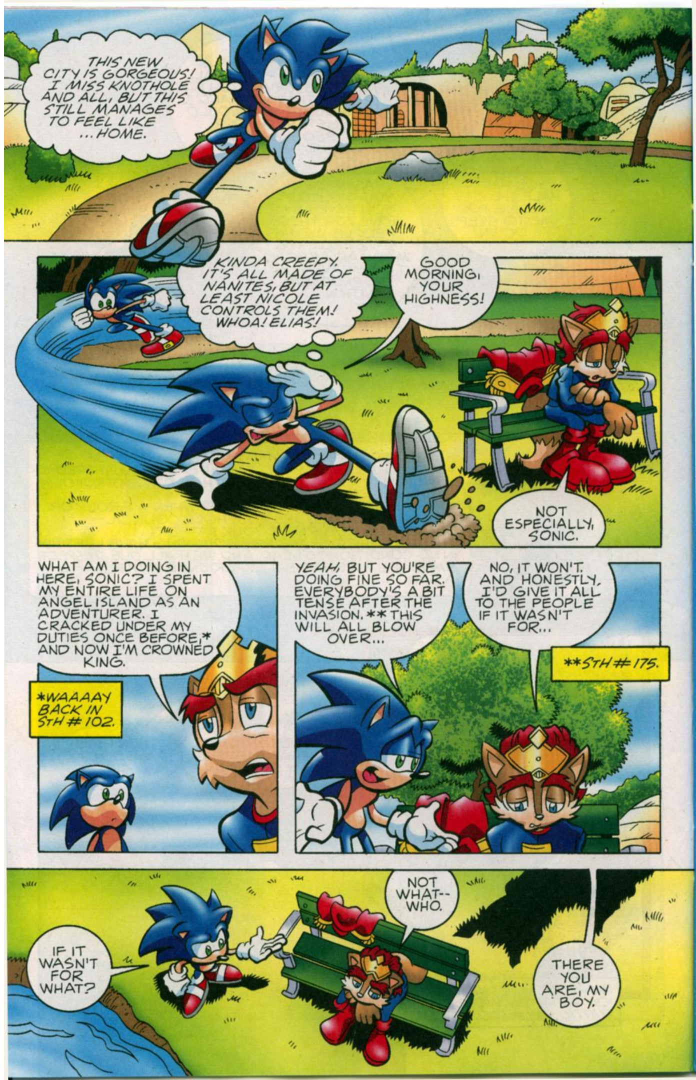

WHAT?
SONIC... KEEP IN MIND THAT AMADEUS IS TAILS' FATHER.
I GET THAT, BUT IT WAS STILL A DUMB MOVE. TAILS RISKED A LOT TO SAVE HIS FOLKS, AND NOW HIS DAD PULLS THIS STUNT?
I KNOW YOU'RE CONCERNED FOR TAILS, BUT I GET THE FEELING THAT THINGS HAVE BEEN TENSE BETWEEN YOU.
IF YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT THE BLOW-UP AT FREEDOM HQ,* THAT WAS NOTHING! WE WERE ALL UNDER A LOT OF STRESS.
NO, I MEAN SINCE YOU RETURNED FROM SPACE.** YOU MAY WANT TO TALK WITH HIM.
*SEE STH #176
**AND SEE STH #130.
WE'RE PRACTICALLY BROTHERS, NICOLE! WE'RE FINE! NOW, IF YOU'LL EXCUSE ME...
...I'M GOING TO SEE KNUCKLES BEFORE HE HEADS OUT.


UNCLE CHUCK'S
...OR TAKE JUST TWO OF US. IT ISN'T SAFE TO GO BACK TO ANGEL ISLAND ALONE.
I KNOW THAT. THAT'S PART OF THE REASON I'M GOING SOLO.
RRGH! VECTOR! YOU TALK SOME SENSE INTO HIM!
I GOTTA ADMIT SHE'S GOT A POINT. THAT, AND YOU MADE NO SENSE JUST NOW.
LOOK, I'VE STAYED HERE THIS LONG BECAUSE THEY NEEDED THE EXTRA HELP. NOW THAT THEY'RE IN NEW MOBOTROPOLIS, THEY'RE SAFE. I CAN AFFORD SOME DAMAGE CONTROL BACK HOME.
IT'S OUR HOME, TOO, KNUCKLES. I'M BEGGING YOU. AND I DON'T BEG! YOU'LL NEED HELP!
I'LL HAVE DAD THERE TO BACK ME UP. I NEED TO SETTLE THINGS WITH HIM ANYWAY...
...AND I CAN ONLY DO THAT ALONE.
GOOD! I DIDN'T MISS YOU!
JUST BARELY. I'M LEAVING NOW.


YEAH, ABOUT THAT--HOW?
THE GUIDING STAR GEM. IT SHOULD BE ABLE TO CHANNEL THE CHAOS FORCE AND GET ME THERE.
WHY NOT TAKE THE GREY CHAOS EMERALD WE RECOVERED FROM KNOTHOLE?
AND LUG IT ALL OVER THE ISLAND? SO IT COULD BE STOLEN BY ONE OF THE THREE WARRING FACTIONS?
WELL, WHEN YOU PUT IT THAT WAY...
ONCE I MAKE IT TO ANGEL ISLAND...
IF YOU DO...
...ONCE I'M THERE, I'LL CONTACT YOU. IF THINGS GET OUT OF CONTROL, I'LL CALL YOU IN. OKAY?
NO. BUT OKAY.
SHKOOM
DON'T WORRY, 'SU. OUR BOY CAN TAKE CARE OF HIMSELF.
HE BETTER.


DETENTION CENTER...
WELL, SNAP MY FANNY AND CALL ME MOUTH! LOOKIE, LOOKIE!
THE LITTLE SNOTLING KING DESCENDS FROM ON HIGH!
HOW'S YOUR SISTER, KINGY?
HISSSSS!
I WANNA WEAR THE CROWN! I WANNA WEAR THE CROWN!
LET ME OUT OF HERE, AND YOU CAN HAVE THE HEAD TO GO WITH IT!
ENOUGH!
THE KING IS NEITHER IMPRESSED NOR INTIMIDATED BY YOUR MEANINGLESS BLATHERING. PERMIT US ALL SOME PEACE... OR FACE MY TELEPATHIC RETRIBUTION!
ERM... THANK YOU, MOGUL. NOW... GENERAL PROWER. WOULD YOU CARE TO EXPLAIN WHY YOU LED A RIOT TODAY?


I ASSURE YOU IT WAS NOT PERSONAL. I'VE OBSERVED YOU FOR SOME TIME NOW, AND I THOUGHT YOU WOULD LISTEN TO YOUR PEOPLE. IT WAS NOT A RIOT.
YOU HAD HALF THE CITY CALLING FOR ME TO STEP DOWN!
AS WELL YOU SHOULD, IF YOU HAVE ANY LOVE FOR THESE PEOPLE. WE ARE SAFE FROM THE MADMAN ABROAD. IT IS TIME WE FIX THE PROBLEM WITHIN.
IN THE LAST THREE GENERATIONS, THE HOUSE OF ACORNS HAS LED US INTO THE GREAT WAR, USHERED IN DR. ROBOTNIK, AND LOST BOTH OLD MOBOTROPOLIS AND KNOTHOLE. THE MOST PROGRESS HAPPENED WHEN A GROUP OF CHILDREN FORMED THE KNOTHOLE COUNCIL-- BEFORE THE RETURN OF YOUR FATHER! THE HARDSHIPS OF THE PREVIOUS KING HAVE LEFT HIM IN NO CONDITION TO LEAD, AND WITH ALL DUE RESPECT, SIRE, YOU HAVE HAD NO EXPERIENCE WITH RUNNING A NATION.
MY TIME ON ARGENTUM* SHOWED ME THE POWER OF A GOVERNMENT RUN BY ITS PEOPLE. I ONLY WANT MY FELLOW MOBIANS TO BE PROPERLY LED AND PROTECTED.
*THE PROWERS WERE ON AN ALIEN WORLD UNTIL STH #170.
WILL THAT BE ALL, SIR?
Y-YES, GENERAL. THAT ANSWERS MY QUESTION.
THEN HAVE A GOOD DAY, SIR.

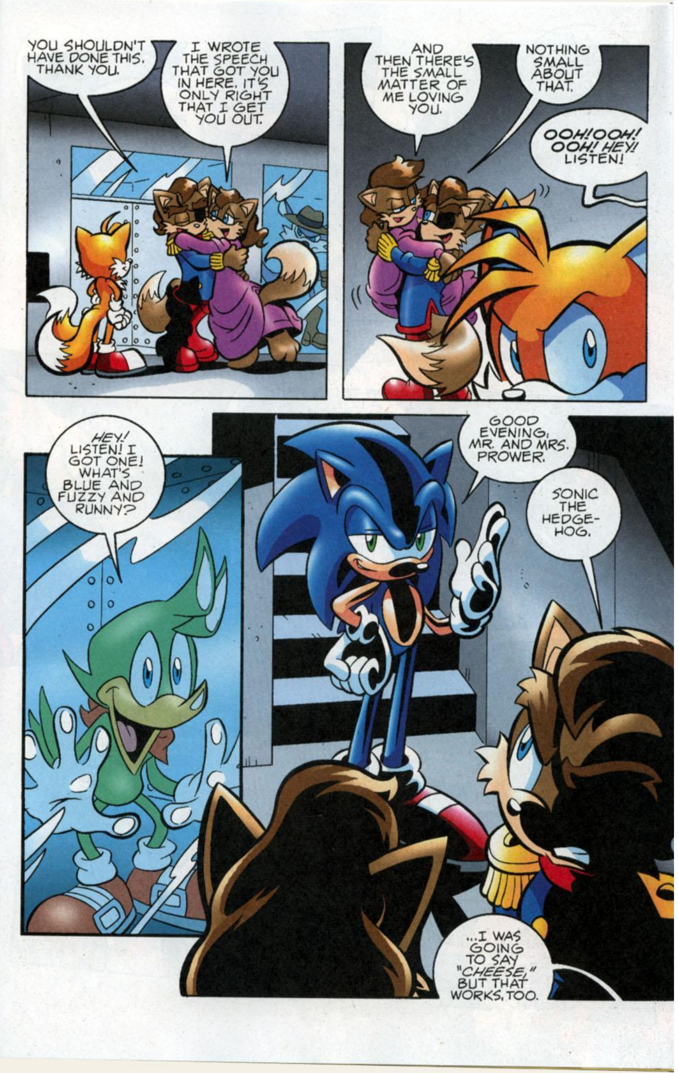

THIS NEW CITY IS GORGEOUS! I MISS KNOTHOLE AND ALL, BUT THIS STILL MANAGES TO FEEL LIKE ...HOME.
KINDA CREEPY. IT'S ALL MADE OF NANITES, BUT AT LEAST NICOLE CONTROLS THEM! WHOA! ELIAS!
GOOD MORNING, YOUR HIGHNESS!
NOT ESPECIALLY, SONIC.
WHAT AM I DOING IN HERE, SONIC? I SPENT MY ENTIRE LIFE ON ANGEL ISLAND AS AN ADVENTURER. I CRACKED UNDER MY DUTIES ONCE BEFORE,* AND NOW I'M CROWNED KING.
*WAAAAY BACK IN STH #102.
YEAH, BUT YOU'RE DOING FINE SO FAR. EVERYBODY'S A BIT TENSE AFTER THE INVASION.** THIS WILL ALL BLOW OVER...
NO, IT WON'T. AND HONESTLY, I'D GIVE IT ALL TO THE PEOPLE IF IT WASN'T FOR...
**STH #175.
IF IT WASN'T FOR WHAT?
NOT WHAT-- WHO.
THERE YOU ARE, MY BOY.


WE HAVE MUCH TO DISCUSS, ELIAS.
DO WE, FATHER?
OH, YES. LIKE HOW YOU'RE TO PUNISH THE TRAITORS AND THEIR RING-LEADER!
GENERAL PROWER HAS BEEN IMPRISONED, AND HIS TRIAL WILL...
BE A WASTE OF TIME, AGREED! HE WILL BE DEALT WITH SEVERELY, AS WELL AS THE REST OF HIS CO-CONSPIRATORS!
UM, YOUR FORMER-HIGHNESS? DO YOU REALLY WANT TO TRY TO ARREST HALF THE CITY!?!
ARE YOU ONE OF HIS MEN?
ER...NO? I'M SONIC THE HEDGEHOG. YOU KNIGHTED ME ONCE, REMEMBER? I SAVED YOU FROM THE ZONE OF SILENCE? ...DATED YOUR DAUGHTER?
HRM...I SUPPOSE.
SUPPOSE? SUPPOSE WHAT?
WE MAY HAVE REACTED TOO STRONGLY, FATHER. AMADEUS IS SPEAKING FOR THE PEOPLE...
AND THEY MAY SPEAK ALL THEY WANT! THAT DOESN'T CHANGE THE FACT THAT WE HAVE RULED FOR HUNDREDS OF YEARS AND WE'LL DO SO FOR HUNDREDS MORE!
THE HEAT OF THE DAY IS GETTING TO US. LET US RETURN TO THE CASTLE.
YES, SIR...
OKAY... AFTER ALL THAT, WHOSE SIDE DO I WANT TO BE ON?


WHIRRR
I RECOMMEND NOT BREAKING INTO THIS FACILITY. OTHERWISE I WILL HAVE TO--
YOU ?!?
BLIP

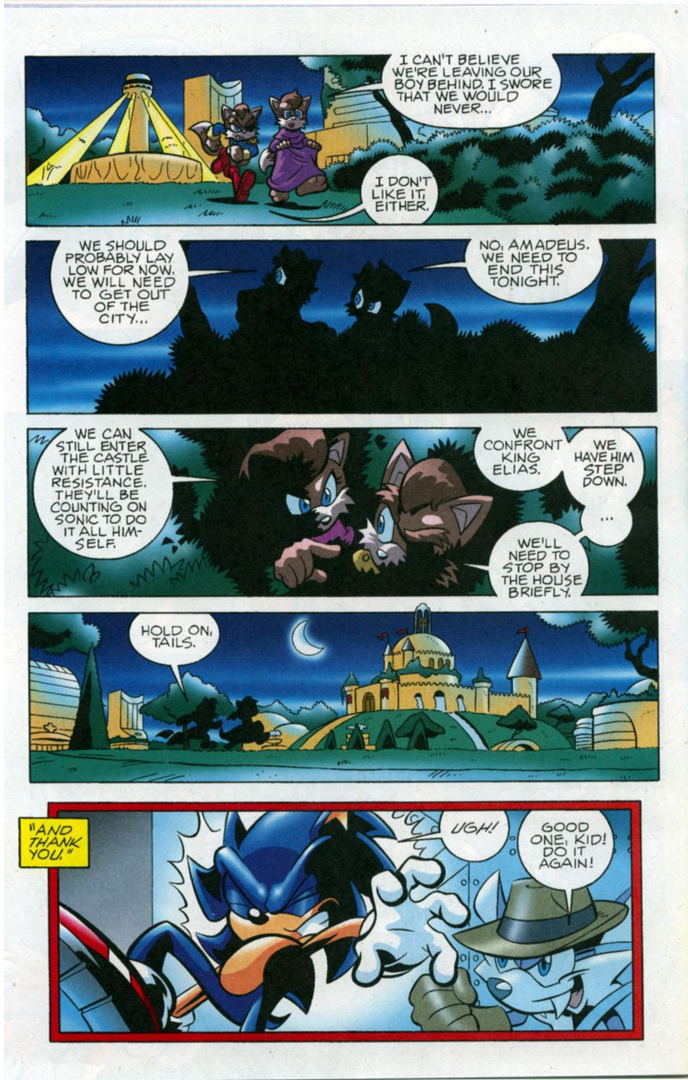

YOU HAVE A REMARKABLE BOY, AMADEUS. SUCH POWER AND POTENTIAL INSIDE HIM.
DID YOU KNOW HIS POWER SUSTAINED ME FOR MONTHS AT ONE POINT?* THE CHOSEN ONE INDEED! YOU MUST BE PROUD OF WHAT HE HAS ACCOMPLISHED ALREADY.
I AM.
*DIG OUT THE BACK ISSUES AND FIND STH #114.
YOU CAN ADD AIDING AND ABETTING TO THE LIST.
ROSEMARY--?!?
YOU LEAVE MY DAD ALONE!
WE'RE HERE TO GET YOU OUT.
IF WE ACT QUICKLY, WE MIGHT BE ABLE TO STAVE OFF CIVIL WAR.
WAR???
OUR PROTEST MAY HAVE GOTTEN A BIT HEATED, BUT THE KING OVERREACTED. TENSIONS ARE HIGH ALREADY. WE HAVE TO ACT NOW FOR STABILITY'S SAKE.
I WON'T HAVE YOU IMPRISONED AS WELL.
WHY NOT? WE'RE ALREADY DEEP ENOUGH INTO THIS. DON'T WORRY, DAD...


"...I'LL PROTECT US."
SONIC!
GAH!
LOOK, I KNOW YOU CAN BE ANYWHERE IN THE CITY, BUT COULD YOU PLEASE KNOCK NEXT TIME?
I'M SORRY, SONIC! I'M STILL ADJUSTING TO A CORPOREAL LIFE.
YAWN!
IT'S COOL! WHAT'S UP? BESIDES ME, NOW.
THERE'S BEEN A BREACH AT THE DETENTION CENTER. THEY'RE TRYING TO BREAK OUT GENERAL PROWER.
WAIT! YOU DON'T KNOW WHO'S DOING IT!


YOU SHOULDN'T HAVE DONE THIS. THANK YOU.
I WROTE THE SPEECH THAT GOT YOU IN HERE. IT'S ONLY RIGHT THAT I GET YOU OUT.
AND THEN THERE'S THE SMALL MATTER OF ME LOVING YOU.
NOTHING SMALL ABOUT THAT.
OOH! OOH! OOH! HEY! LISTEN!
HEY! LISTEN! I GOT ONE! WHAT'S BLUE AND FUZZY AND RUNNY?
GOOD EVENING, MR. AND MRS. PROWER.
SONIC THE HEDGE-HOG.
...I WAS GOING TO SAY "CHEESE," BUT THAT WORKS, TOO.


YOU WON'T HAVE HIM AGAIN! HE'S DONE NOTHING WRONG.
HE STARTED A RIOT AGAINST THE KING, MA'AM. THAT KINDA COUNTS AS TREASON...!
AND THE PEOPLE SIDE WITH HIM. DOESN'T THAT TELL YOU SOMETHING?
IT TELLS ME THAT A LOT OF PEOPLE AGREE WITH HIM, BUT IT'S THE WRONG WAY TO GO ABOUT IT. AND BREAKING HIM OUT OF JAIL ISN'T GOING TO HELP.
THEN WHAT ABOUT TAILS? CAN YOU STAND HIM KNOWING YOU HELPED KEEP HIS FATHER IN JAIL?
I KNOW YOU'RE HIS REAL FAMILY, BUT HE GREW UP WITH ME. HECK, THE KID WORSHIPS ME. HE'LL GET OVER IT.


GET OVER YOUR-SELF.
WHAM
I'LL KEEP HIM BUSY! YOU GUYS GO!
ABSOLUTELY NOT! I WON'T LEAVE YOU TO FEND FOR YOUR-SELF WHEN...
GIVING US OUR ONE CHANCE. MOVE, ROSE-MARY!
AMADEUS PROWER! HOW CAN YOU--?!
OUR SON HAS SPENT HIS LIFE FIGHTING DOCTOR ROBOTNIK AND SOME VILLAINS THAT WOULD HAVE CRUSHED MY TROOPS IN THE PAST. HE'S MORE THAN CAPABLE. WE'LL ONLY BE IN HIS WAY. NOW LET'S MOVE.
OKAY...IT'S YOUR DAD, SO I CAN KIND OF LET THAT SLIDE...BUT YOU REALLY NEED TO MOVE, TAILS.
NO. NEVER. NEVER AGAIN, SONIC.


I CAN'T BELIEVE WE'RE LEAVING OUR BOY BEHIND. I SWORE THAT WE WOULD NEVER...
I DON'T LIKE IT, EITHER.
WE SHOULD PROBABLY LAY LOW FOR NOW. WE WILL NEED TO GET OUT OF THE CITY...
NO, AMADEUS. WE NEED TO END THIS TONIGHT.
WE CAN STILL ENTER THE CASTLE WITH LITTLE RESISTANCE. THEY'LL BE COUNTING ON SONIC TO DO IT ALL HIM-SELF.
WE CONFRONT KING ELIAS.
WE HAVE HIM STEP DOWN.
...
WE'LL NEED TO STOP BY THE HOUSE BRIEFLY.
HOLD ON, TAILS.
"AND THANK YOU."
UGH!
GOOD ONE, KID! DO IT AGAIN!



FREEDOM HQ EXTERIOR VIEW

DATA-FILE:

Freedom HQ is built around the old limestone cavern the Freedom Fighters first gathered in. It's built directly into the rock wall for protection. The domed top houses the solar arrays and provides extra protection.

There are only two ways into the base:
1) The front entrance built into the face of the cliffside.
2) A secret passage leading in from the Great Forest. This speedy way in is called the Great Oak Slide.



INFORMATION GATHERED BY: Ian Flynn VISUAL IDENTIFICATION BY: Tracy Yardley!

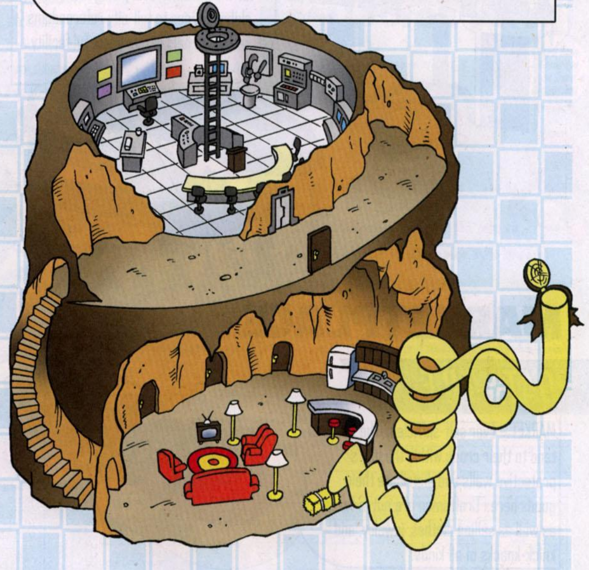
S-849a 11/03/06 U-25

FREEDOM HQ
INTERIOR VIEW

DATA-FILE:

Freedom HQ is both the Freedom Fighters' base and a home away from home. The base is a decoy to draw Dr. Eggman's wrath from New Mobotropolis. The common room has plenty of space for hanging out or recreation. Each hall leads to three specific areas:

1) The Bunks – A coed hall with personal space for each of the Freedom Fighters and Chaotix.
2) The Lab – A high-tech space for science, research and development
3) Kitchen – Perfect place for a victory meal or a late-night snack



INFORMATION GATHERED BY: Ian Flynn VISUAL IDENTIFICATION BY: Tracy Yardley!
S-849a 11/03/06 U-25

LIBRARY

DATA-FILE:

LIBRARY – A center of learning for young and old alike. Nicole managed to recreate almost all of the material lost to the Robotropolis disaster.
The information is both in raw data and in books.

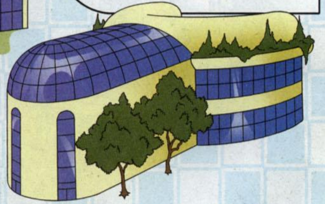


CIVIC CENTER



DATA-FILE:

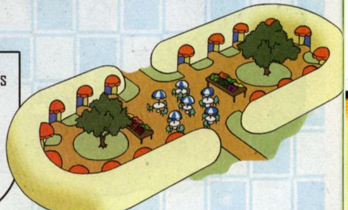
CIVIC CENTER – The social gathering hub for the citizens. Everything from small club meetings to full-city referendums can be held in this beautiful facility.



MARKETPLACE

DATA-FILE:

MARKET – Ever self-sufficient, the Mobians tend to their crops within the city's protective walls and distribute their goods here. Craftsmen are out in force as well as selling clothes, jewelry, and knick-knacks of all kinds.



INFORMATION GATHERED BY: Ian Flynn VISUAL IDENTIFICATION BY: Tracy Yardley!
S-848 10/20/06 U-24

NEW MOBOTROPOLIS



DATA-FILE:

This sparkling city was once a testing ground for Dr. Eggman's nanites. Nicole took control of the nanites and restructured the mess into the glittering home for the Mobians. Almost everything is made of nanites – from the homes to the forest. The surrounding wall generates a powerful force-field that protects it from outside attacks.

Points of interest are:

1) Castle Acorn
2) Market
3) Lake of Rings
4) Frederick Airbase
5) School
6) Science Center
7) Uncle Chuck's Diner
8) Tommy Turtle Memorial Hospital
9) Prison
10) Royal Army HQ
11) Power Plant
12) Library
13) Civic Center
14) Coliseum
15) Julayla Memorial Garden
16) Residential Area
17) Faux Forest
18) Protective Wall
19) Food Storage
20) Theater
21) Temple

INFORMATION GATHERED BY: Ian Flynn VISUAL IDENTIFICATION BY: Tracy Yardley!
S-842 10/20/06 U-18



*Be back next issue when friends collide and the fate of a Kingdom hangs in the balance! Will the rebuilt city crumble from within?! Tails the outlaw must be brought to justice! **SONIC VS. TAILS!***

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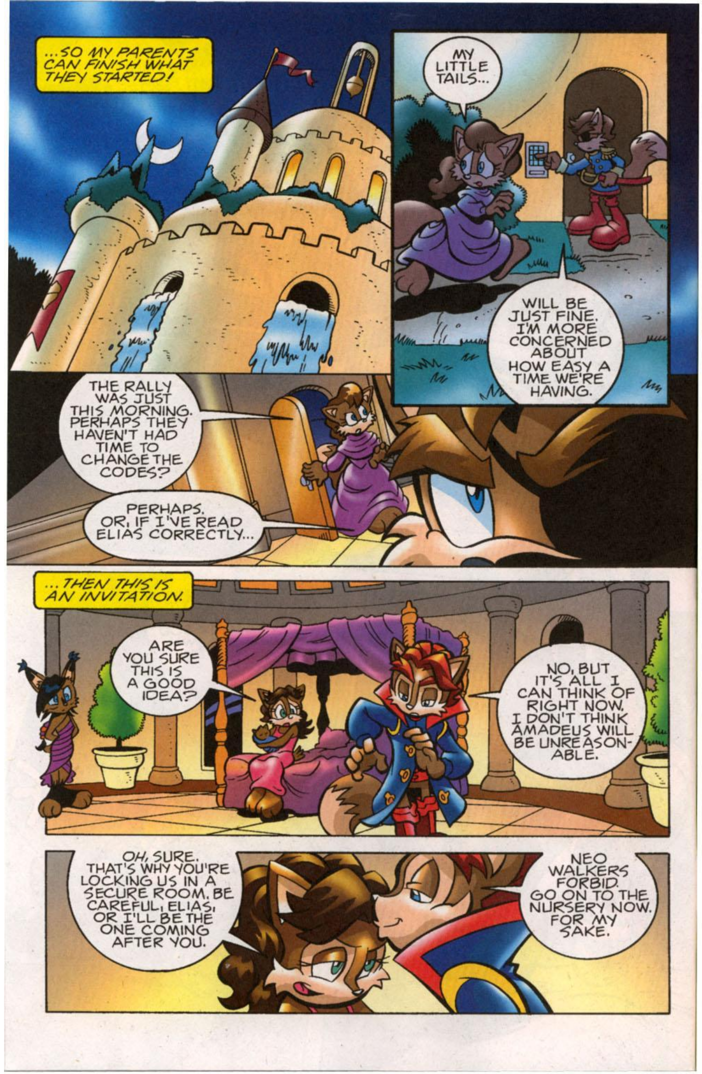
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Tracy Yardley! - Jim Amash
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HOUSE OF CARDS
Part Two: ROYAL FLUSH
BACK OFF, TAILS! I'VE GOT TO STOP YOUR FOLKS BEFORE THEY DO SOMETHING STUPID!
NO! I'M THROUGH LISTENING TO YOU!
Writer: IAN FLYNN
Penciller: TRACY YARDLEY!
Inker: JIM AMASH
Letterer: JOHN WORKMAN
Colorist: JASON JENSEN
Cover: YARDLEY! • AMASH • JENSEN
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Managing Editor: VICTOR GORELICK
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Special thanks to ROBERT LEFFLER, DYNA LOPEZ and CINDY CHAU at SEGA licensing
NICOLE LIVING COMPUTER PROGRAM
MILES "TAILS" PROWER REBELLING SIDEKICK
SONIC THE HEDGEHOG HERO CAUGHT IN THE MIDDLE
KING ELIAS ACORN YOUNG BESIEGED KING
AMADEUS & ROSEMARY PROWER WOULD-BE REVOLUTIONARIES


LOOK! I'M SORRY YOUR DAD GOT LOCKED UP, I REALLY AM, BUT...
I'M SURE YOUR HEART BLEEDS.
OOF!
YOU'RE NOT TALKING YOUR WAY OUT OF THIS ONE!
THAT WAS AWESOME! HOW DO YOUR GLUTES FEEL?
SHUT. UP. BEAN.
YOU'RE MAKING IT REAL HARD FOR ME TO HOLD BACK, BUD. I CAN UNDERSTAND WANTING TO HELP YOUR FAMILY. BUT I'M NOT COOL WITH YOU ATTACKING ME.
TOUGH! YOU'VE HAD THIS COMING FOR A LONG TIME!



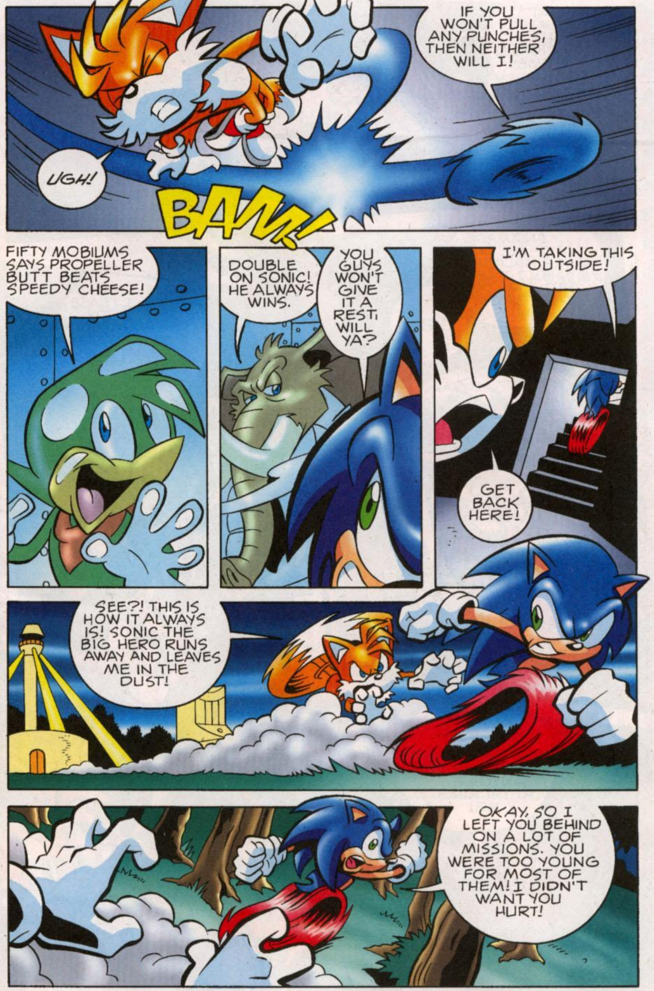
ME?! WHAT DID I EVER DO TO YOU?
THAT'S MY POINT, EXACTLY!
YOU HAVE NO CLUE BECAUSE YOU DON'T CARE! AND I'M SICK AND TIRED OF IT!
OF WHAT ?!
WHAT'S THE POINT IN EXPLAINING IT TO YOU? YOU NEVER LISTEN!
YEEP! I THOUGHT YOU WERE THE ONE NOT LISTENING ANYMORE!
STOP TRYING TO BE WITTY! ALL I HAVE TO DO IS KEEP YOU PINNED DOWN HERE...



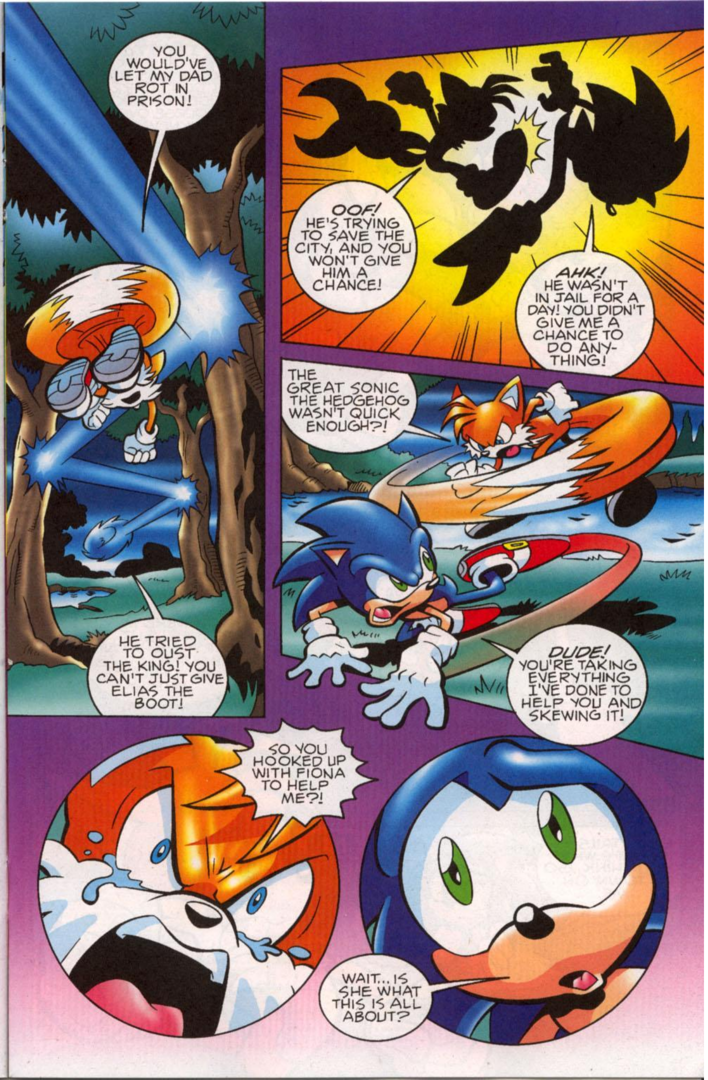
...SO MY PARENTS CAN FINISH WHAT THEY STARTED!
MY LITTLE TAILS...
WILL BE JUST FINE. I'M MORE CONCERNED ABOUT HOW EASY A TIME WE'RE HAVING.
THE RALLY WAS JUST THIS MORNING. PERHAPS THEY HAVEN'T HAD TIME TO CHANGE THE CODES?
PERHAPS. OR, IF I'VE READ ELIAS CORRECTLY...
...THEN THIS IS AN INVITATION.
ARE YOU SURE THIS IS A GOOD IDEA?
NO, BUT IT'S ALL I CAN THINK OF RIGHT NOW. I DON'T THINK AMADEUS WILL BE UNREASON-ABLE.
OH, SURE. THAT'S WHY YOU'RE LOCKING US IN A SECURE ROOM. BE CAREFUL, ELIAS, OR I'LL BE THE ONE COMING AFTER YOU.
NEO WALKERS FORBID. GO ON TO THE NURSERY NOW. FOR MY SAKE.

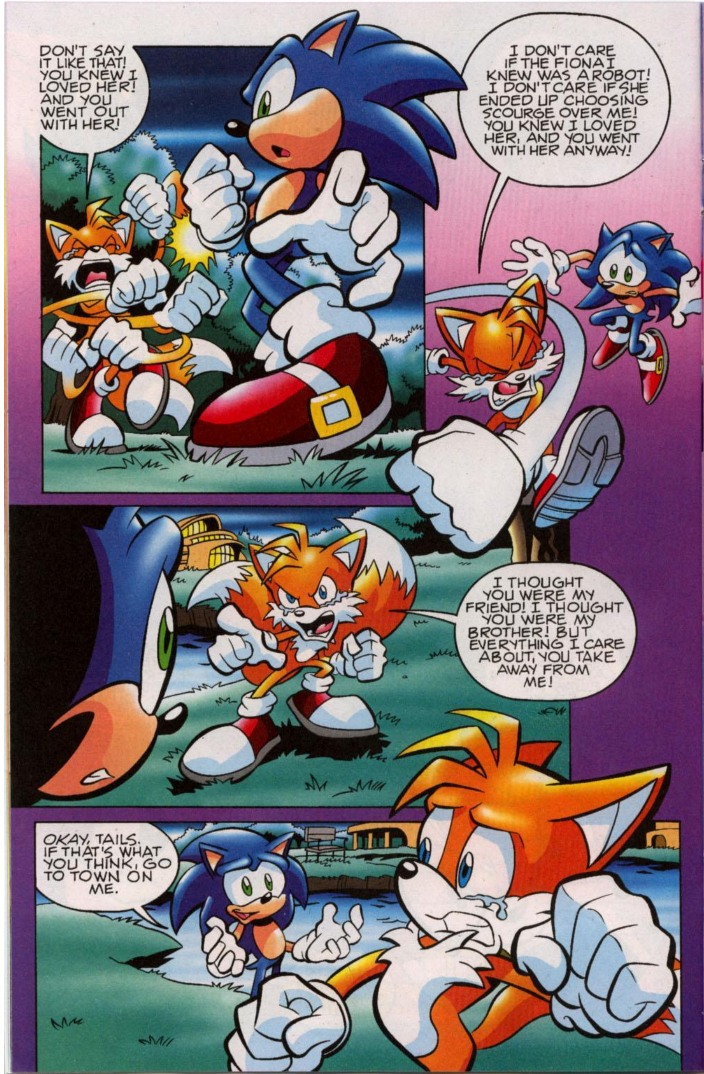

NO MATTER WHAT HAPPENS, MAKE SURE MEG AND ALEXIS ARE KEPT SAFE. AND ABOVE ALL ELSE, DO NOT WAKE UP MY FATHER.
ALL-- ALL RIGHT...
ALL OF THIS IS UNNECESSARY, SIRE.
YOUR GUARDS ARE ABSENT, AND THE LOCKS ARE UNDONE. YOU OBVIOUSLY WANT US HERE.
NICOLE INFORMED ME OF YOUR ESCAPE, AND I KNEW YOU WOULD COME STRAIGHT HERE. YOU SAID YOUR PEACE BACK IN THE DETENTION CENTER. NOW I WILL SAY MINE.
MY FATHER HAS NEARLY LOST HIS LIFE THREE TIMES OVER TO PRESERVE THIS KINGDOM, AND HE SUFFERS FROM THAT A LIFE-TIME OF STRUGGLE AND VIO-LENCE. THERE ARE DOZENS OF HEROES IN THIS CITY WHO SPENT THEIR CHILDHOODS FIGHTING TO PROTECT THE ACORN TITLE. I CANNOT AND WILL NOT BELITTLE ALL THAT THEY HAVE GIVEN FOR MY FAMILY AND MY KINGDOM.


AND WHAT OF THE RALLY THIS MORNING? THE SO-CALLED "RIOT," WILL YOU IGNORE THOSE PEOPLE?
I CANNOT JUST DISSOLVE THE KINGDOM AND HAND IT TO THE ANGRY MASSES. THAT MAKES NO SENSE.
YOU WOULD RISK CIVIL WAR TO PRESERVE A FAULTY MONARCHY?
I WOULD PRESERVE ORDER OVER SUBMITTING TO YOUR ANARCHY!
THEN IT HAS COME TO THIS...
FOR MY PEOPLE, I WILL SEE YOU DETHRONED!
CLANG
FOR MY PEOPLE, I WILL SEE YOU DEFEATED!


IF YOU WON'T PULL ANY PUNCHES, THEN NEITHER WILL I!
UGH!
BAM!
FIFTY MOBIUMS SAYS PROPELLER BUTT BEATS SPEEDY CHEESE!
DOUBLE ON SONIC! HE ALWAYS WINS.
YOU GUYS WON'T GIVE IT A REST, WILL YA?
I'M TAKING THIS OUTSIDE!
GET BACK HERE!
SEE?! THIS IS HOW IT ALWAYS IS! SONIC THE BIG HERO RUNS AWAY AND LEAVES ME IN THE DUST!
OKAY, SO I LEFT YOU BEHIND ON A LOT OF MISSIONS. YOU WERE TOO YOUNG FOR MOST OF THEM! I DIDN'T WANT YOU HURT!


THAT'S WHAT I USED TO BELIEVE! BUT THEN I FACTORED IN ALL THE TIMES YOU TEASED ME...
...AND MADE FUN OF ME AND NEVER BELIEVED ME WHEN I TALKED ABOUT MY OWN ADVENTURES!
GRK!
DUDE, I TEASE EVERYBODY. IT'S WHAT I DO. I DON'T MEAN TO HURT ANYBODY'S FEELINGS.
EXCEPT MAYBE SHADOW. OR EGGMAN. BUT EVEN STILL, YOU DON'T SEE ANTOINE ATTACKING ME!

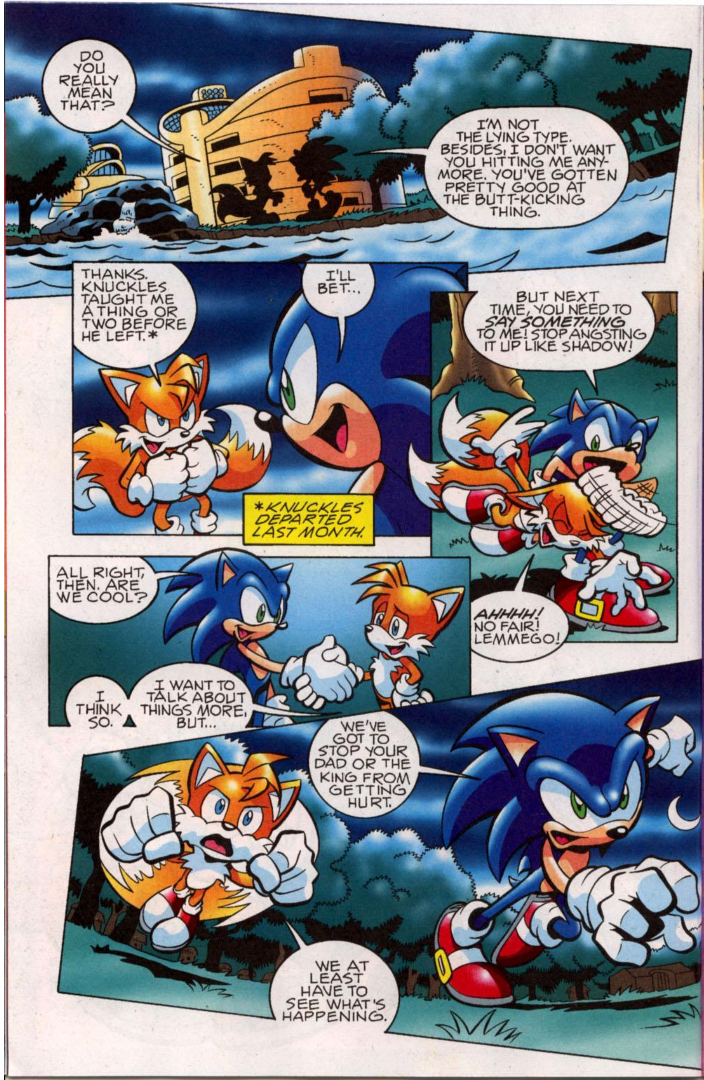

YOU WOULD'VE LET MY DAD ROT IN PRISON!
HE TRIED TO OUST THE KING! YOU CAN'T JUST GIVE ELIAS THE BOOT!
OOF! HE'S TRYING TO SAVE THE CITY, AND YOU WON'T GIVE HIM A CHANCE!
AHK! HE WASN'T IN JAIL FOR A DAY! YOU DIDN'T GIVE ME A CHANCE TO DO ANY-THING!
THE GREAT SONIC THE HEDGEHOG WASN'T QUICK ENOUGH?!
DUDE! YOU'RE TAKING EVERYTHING I'VE DONE TO HELP YOU AND SKEWING IT!
SO YOU HOOKED UP WITH FIONA TO HELP ME?!
WAIT... IS SHE WHAT THIS IS ALL ABOUT?


DON'T SAY IT LIKE THAT! YOU KNEW I LOVED HER! AND YOU WENT OUT WITH HER!
I DON'T CARE IF THE FIONA I KNEW WAS A ROBOT! I DON'T CARE IF SHE ENDED UP CHOOSING SCOURGE OVER ME! YOU KNEW I LOVED HER, AND YOU WENT WITH HER ANYWAY!
I THOUGHT YOU WERE MY FRIEND! I THOUGHT YOU WERE MY BROTHER! BUT EVERYTHING I CARE ABOUT, YOU TAKE AWAY FROM ME!
OKAY, TAILS. IF THAT'S WHAT YOU THINK, GO TO TOWN ON ME.


CLANG
SWIF
WHAT IN THE --?!
WHOA!
FORGIVE ME, YOUR MAJESTY...
I DID NOT WAKE YOUR PARENTS. YOU SAID NOTHING ABOUT WAKING YOUR SISTER, HOWEVER...
SALLY!


I SUPPOSE I SHOULDN'T BE SURPRISED THAT MY ADVENTURER BROTHER AND THE GREAT "CONDUCTOR OF THE BATTLE FIELD" WENT STRAIGHT TO THE FIGHTING.
ELIAS, I KNOW YOU'VE NEVER REALLY WANTED TO RULE. SO WHY ARE YOU HOLDING ONTO IT SO TIGHTLY?
BUT... FATHER...
YOU SAY YOU SPEAK FOR THE PEOPLE, GENERAL PROWER, BUT DID YOUR PEOPLE CALL FOR A BLOODY COUP?
I NEVER WANTED IT TO COME TO THIS...
LET'S NOT FORGET ...I WAS ACTING RULER FOR YEARS. I PRESIDED OVER THE KNOTHOLE COUNCIL WHEN WE NEEDED TO MAKE BIG DECISIONS. OUR GOVERNMENT DOESN'T HAVE TO BE EXCLUSIVELY ONE OR THE OTHER.
NOW, THEN...
ARE WE READY TO *TALK?*


Y-YOU ...YOU'RE TRYING TO TRICK ME...
NOPE. I'M TOTALLY HONEST HERE.
I KNOW FIONA MEANT THE WORLD TO YOU. AND I ALSO KNEW THAT SHE HAD NO INTEREST IN YOU. I WAS HOPING IF WE HOOKED UP, YOU'D MOVE ON. I DIDN'T WANT YOU HURT.
BUT IT WAS SELFISH OF ME, I GUESS. I WAS STILL HURTING FROM BREAKING THINGS OFF WITH SALLY. FIONA WAS THERE. I WENT WITH IT LIKE I GO WITH EVERYTHING ELSE--I JUST DO.
I'VE BEEN A JERK TO YOU, MAN.
I DIDN'T MEAN IT, BUT THAT DOESN'T CHANGE THE FACT THAT I WAS.
I AM TRULY SORRY I HURT YOU, LITTLE BRO!


DO YOU REALLY MEAN THAT?
I'M NOT THE LYING TYPE. BESIDES, I DON'T WANT YOU HITTING ME ANYMORE. YOU'VE GOTTEN PRETTY GOOD AT THE BUTT-KICKING THING.
THANKS. KNUCKLES TAUGHT ME A THING OR TWO BEFORE HE LEFT.*
I'LL BET...
*KNUCKLES DEPARTED LAST MONTH.
BUT NEXT TIME, YOU NEED TO SAY SOMETHING TO ME! STOP ANGSTING IT UP LIKE SHADOW!
AHHHH! NO FAIR! LEMMEGO!
ALL RIGHT, THEN. ARE WE COOL?
I THINK SO.
I WANT TO TALK ABOUT THINGS MORE, BUT...
WE'VE GOT TO STOP YOUR DAD OR THE KING FROM GETTING HURT.
WE AT LEAST HAVE TO SEE WHAT'S HAPPENING.


GENERAL PROWER! YOU NEED TO--!
--*UM*... CONTINUE WHAT YOU'RE DOING, I GUESS?
IT'S ALL RIGHT, SONIC. WE'VE COME TO AN AGREE-MENT.
WE WILL HAVE AN ELECTED COUNCIL OF SIX CITIZENS...
...WHILE THE KING PRESIDES AS A SEVENTH MEMBER. I LOSE SOME POWER TO THE PEOPLE...
...BUT WE DON'T LOSE THE MONARCHY OF OUR HERITAGE.


NOT LONG AFTER...
ELECTION TODAY
THEY'RE PRAISING OUR FAMILY FOR OUR FORESIGHT! THERE'S NO SHAME IN...!
IT'S A SMALL CONCESSION, FATHER. THE PEOPLE ARE HAPPY.
ELIAS...
YOU'VE TAKEN ON A GREAT BURDEN, AND YOU SHOULDER IT WELL. DON'T FORGET THAT *YOU* ARE KING NOW, AND IT IS YOUR WORD THAT COUNTS. GIVE YOUR FATHER TIME.
THANK YOU.

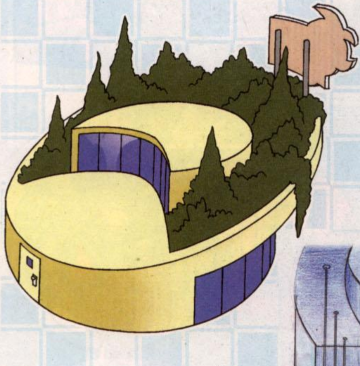


UNCLE CHUCK'S DINER



DATA-FILE:

UNCLE CHUCK'S DINER- The single greatest place to eat in all of New Mobotropolis is Uncle Chuck's. When he's not researching in the Science Center, Sonic's uncle is making the best batch of chili-dogs ever. The casual atmosphere and friendly faces make it the most popular place in town.

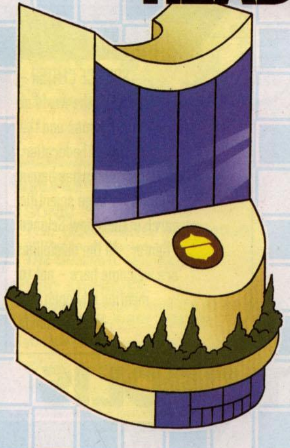




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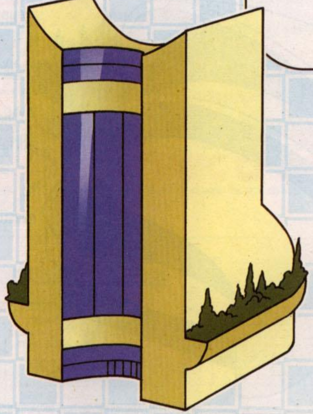
S-845 10/20/06 U-21

ROYAL ARMY HEADQUARTERS



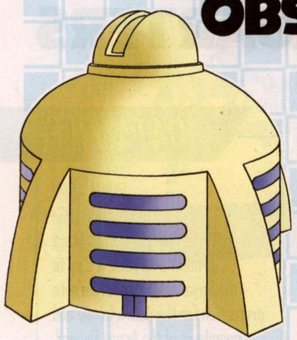
DATA-FILE:

ROYAL ARMY HEADQUARTERS- While the Freedom Fighters protect everyone, it's up to the Royal Army to provide elite protection for the Acorn family and members of the Acorn Council. The facilities have everything the Royal Army needs to train and maintain the best of the best. The top floors are reserved for the Secret Operations branch headed by Commander Geoffrey St. John.



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S-844 10/20/06 U-20

SCIENCE CENTER OBSERVATORY



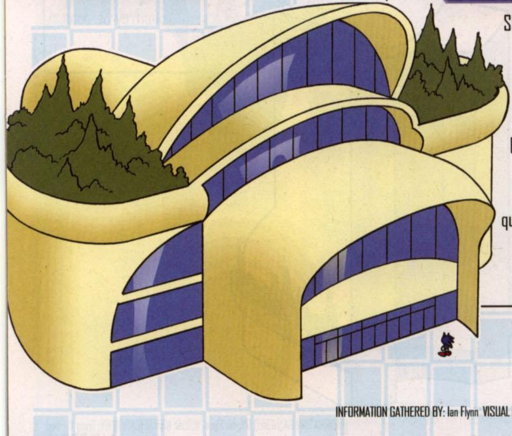
DATA-FILE:

SCIENCE CENTER – To survive in the world of Dr. Eggman and the United Federation, New Mobotropolis has begun cutting-edge scientific research in their new Science Center. All the disciplines are welcome here – not to mention any open and curious minds.

NEW MOBOTROPOLIS SCHOOL

DATA-FILE:

SCHOOL – Every day the youth of New Mobotropolis enter into the halls of learning. Bright young minds are inspired and encouraged to question and explore the boundless academia.



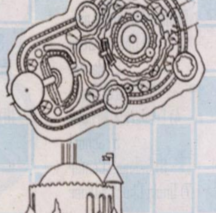
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S-846 10/20/06 U-20

CASTLE ACORN



DATA-FILE:

The seat of the monarchy and the crown jewel of New Mobotropolis. Built in memory of the splendor of Old Mobotropolis, Castle Acorn is home to the royal Acorn family. Since the revolution it also acts as the primary meeting place for the Acorn Council. The counselors all have their offices and optional residences within Castle Acorn.

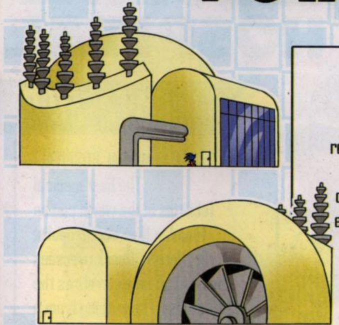




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S-843 10/20/06 U-19

NEW MOBOTROPOLIS POWER PLANT

DATA-FILE:

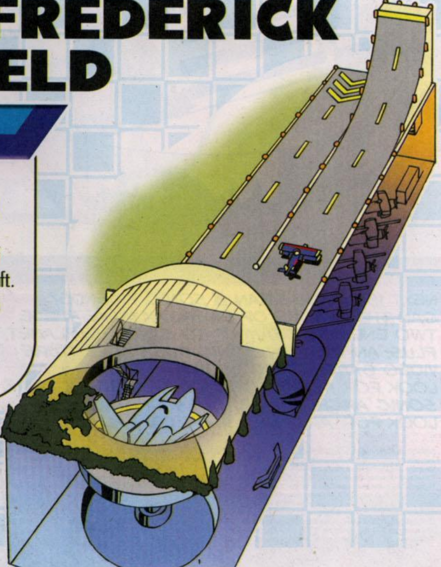


POWER PLANT –
All the nanites that make up New Mobotropolis require a lot of power. An underground conduit runs all the way to the radioactive remains of Robotropolis and siphons off the dangerous energies. These are purified in the Power Plant and used to give clean energy to the city and its citizens while cleaning up a bad mark on Mobius.

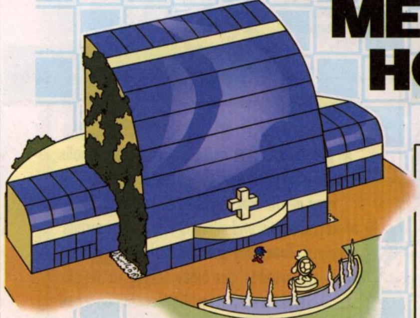
KING FREDERICK AIRFIELD

DATA-FILE:

KING FREDERICK AIRFIELD –
Named after a previous King Acorn, the airfield is the primary launch site for all of the Freedom Fighters' aircraft. Everything from the Tornado to the Freedom Fighter Special mk. II takes off from here!

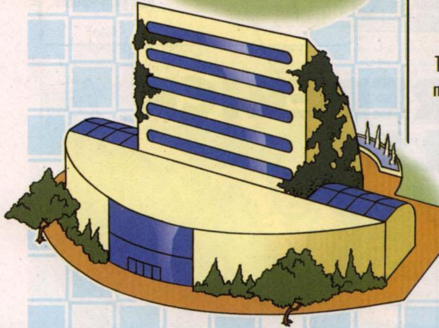


TOMMY TURTLE MEMORIAL HOSPITAL



DATA-FILE:

TOMMY TURTLE MEMORIAL HOSPITAL-
The best medical facilities in the world can be found in New Mobotropolis. Dr. Horatio Quack oversees the hospital on all levels as the staff tends to everything from a runny nose to serious ailments. The maternity ward welcomes the newest citizens with the best care one could hope for. The facilities are named in remembrance of a fallen Freedom Fighter who ensured the well-being of everyone.

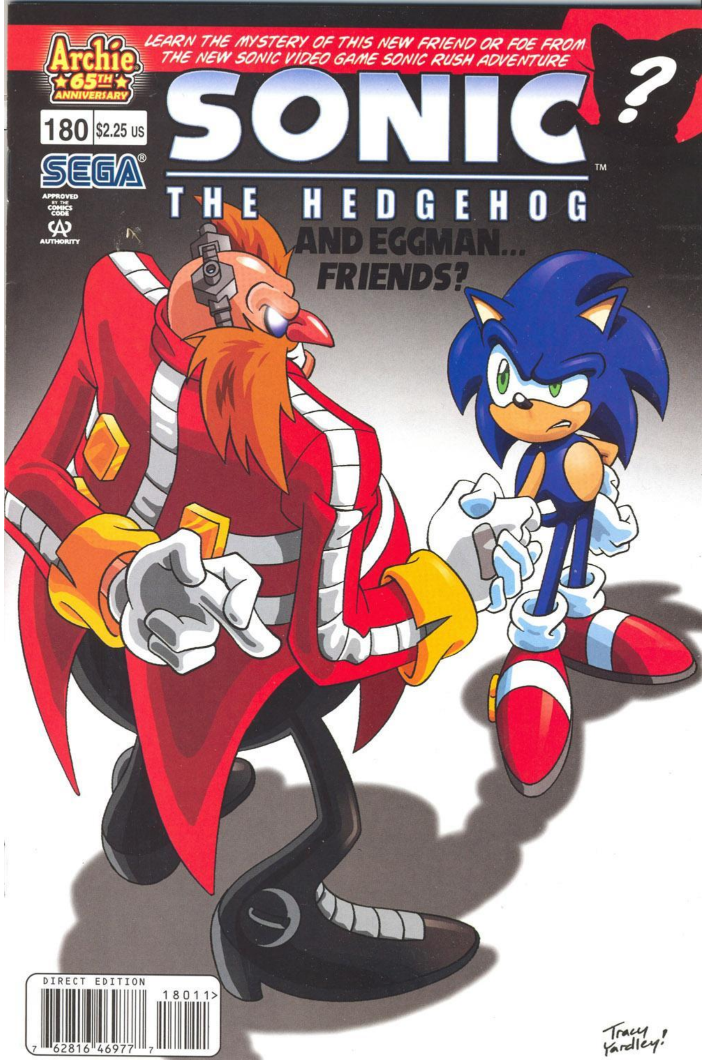


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S-847 10/20/06 U-23

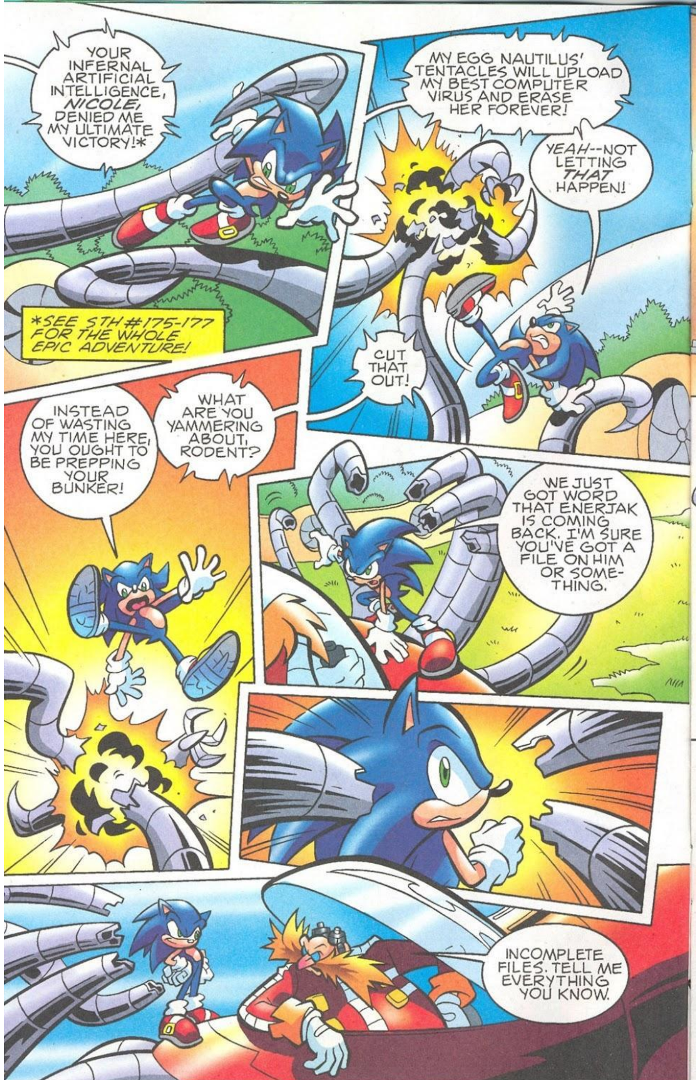
NEXT ISSUE: ***EGGMAN & SONIC,*** FRIENDS?
CAN THE RETURN OF ***ENERJAK*** MAKE THESE TWO ENEMIES TEAM-UP TO SAVE THE PLANET?
PLUS: AN ALL NEW ***SONIC RUSH ADVENTURE*** VIDEO GAME COMIC STORY!
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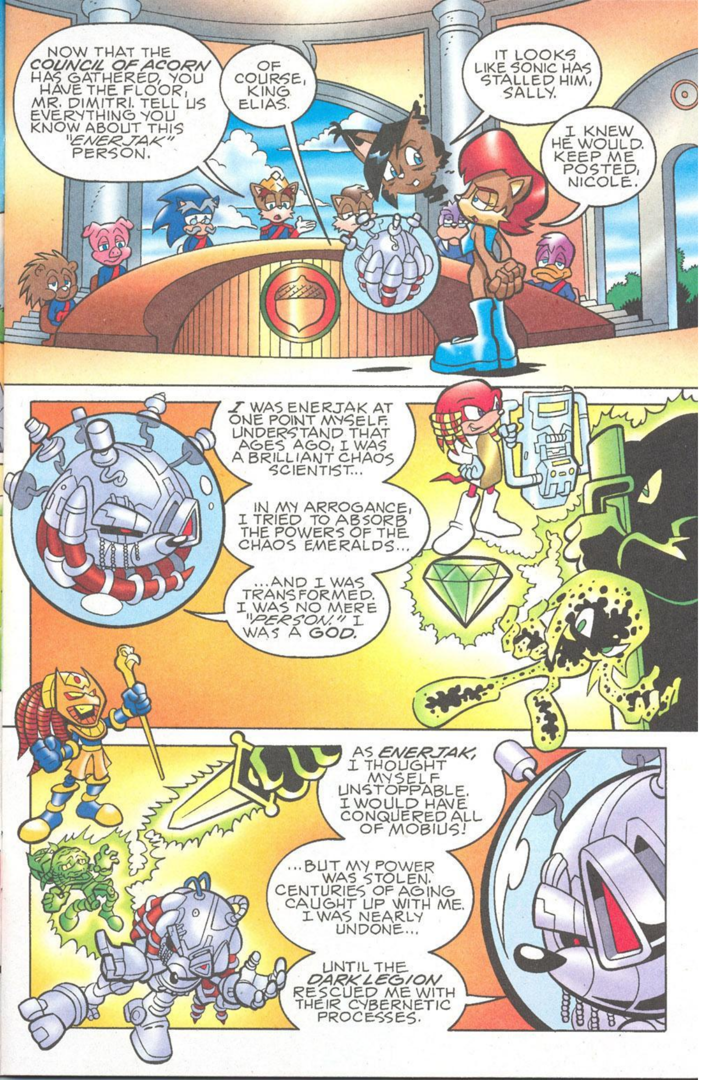


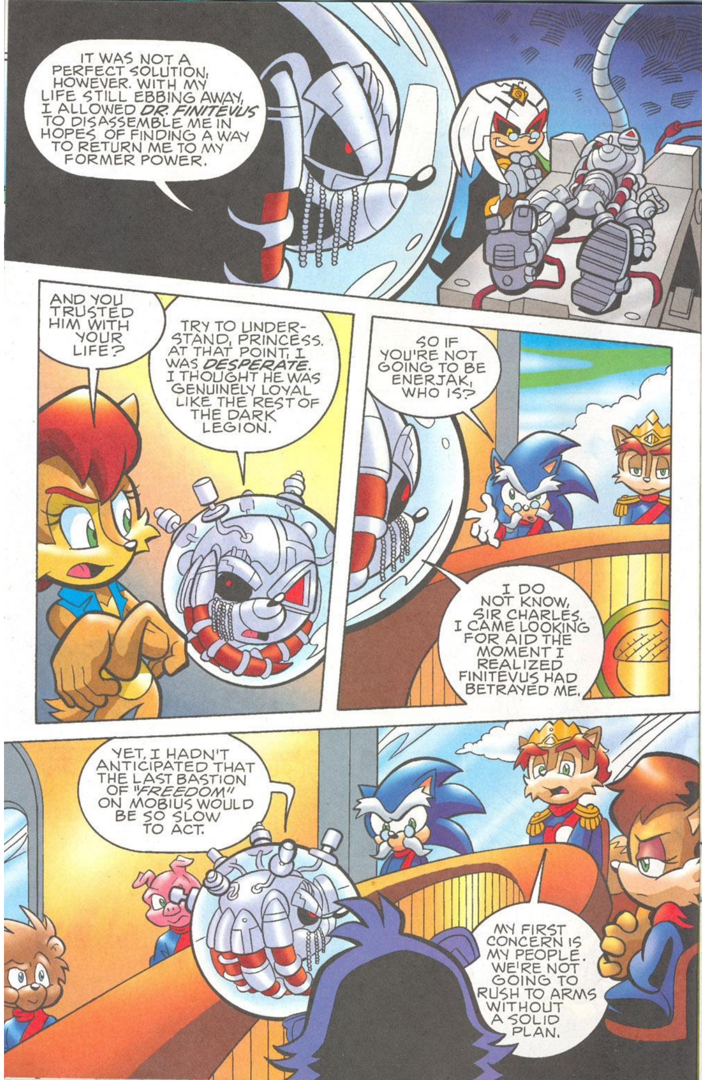
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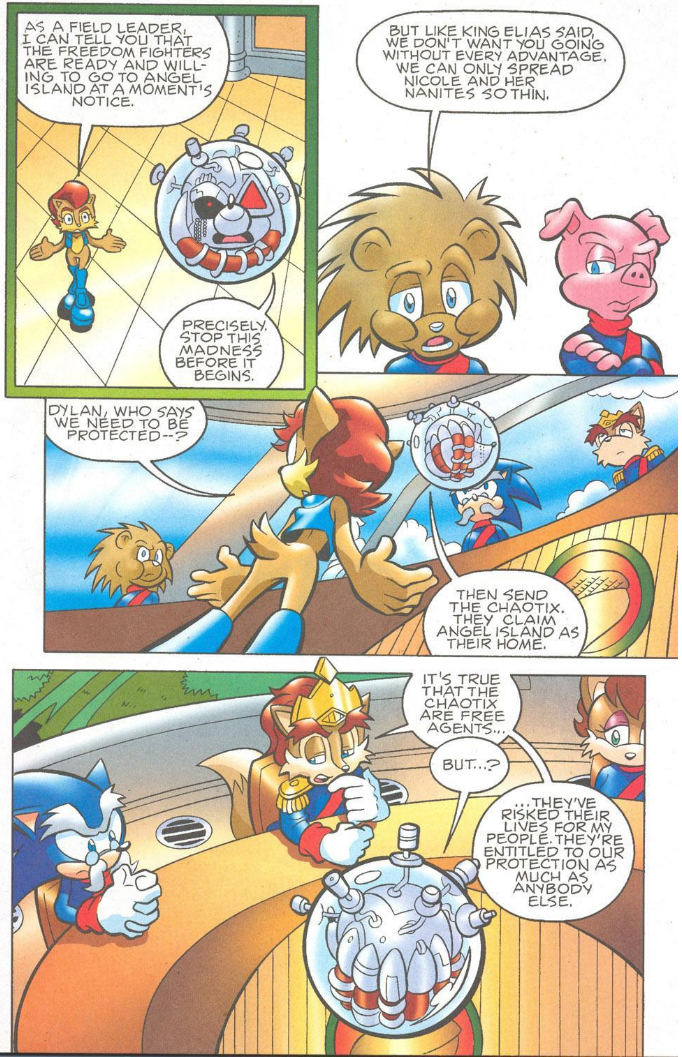

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SONIC
THE HEDGEHOG
AND EGGMAN...
FRIENDS?
DIRECT EDITION
Tracy Yardley!


PREPARATIONS FOR WAR!
STAY OUT OF THIS, SONIC! MY FIGHT ISN'T WITH YOU TODAY!
AS COMFORTING AS THAT IS TO KNOW, DOC, I DON'T HAVE TIME FOR YOU RIGHT NOW!
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Letterer: JOHN WORKMAN • Colorist: JASON JENSEN
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DIMITRI Ancient Echidna Scientist
SONIC THE HEDGEHOG Hero of Mobius
JULIE-SU Knuckles' Warrior Love
DR. IVO "EGGMAN" ROBOTNIK World-Conquering Mad Scientist


YOUR INFERNAL ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE, NICOLE, DENIED ME MY ULTIMATE VICTORY!*
*SEE STH #175-177 FOR THE WHOLE EPIC ADVENTURE!
MY EGG NAUTILUS' TENTACLES WILL UPLOAD MY BEST COMPUTER VIRUS AND ERASE HER FOREVER!
YEAH--NOT LETTING THAT HAPPEN!
CUT THAT OUT!
INSTEAD OF WASTING MY TIME HERE, YOU OUGHT TO BE PREPPING YOUR BUNKER!
WHAT ARE YOU YAMMERING ABOUT, RODENT?
WE JUST GOT WORD THAT ENERJAK IS COMING BACK. I'M SURE YOU'VE GOT A FILE ON HIM OR SOME-THING.
INCOMPLETE FILES. TELL ME EVERYTHING YOU KNOW.


NOW THAT THE *COUNCIL OF ACORN* HAS GATHERED, YOU HAVE THE FLOOR, MR. DIMITRI. TELL US EVERYTHING YOU KNOW ABOUT THIS *"ENERJAK"* PERSON.
OF COURSE, KING ELIAS.
IT LOOKS LIKE SONIC HAS STALLED HIM, SALLY.
I KNEW HE WOULD. KEEP ME POSTED, NICOLE.
I WAS ENERJAK AT ONE POINT MYSELF. UNDERSTAND THAT AGES AGO, I WAS A BRILLIANT CHAOS SCIENTIST...
IN MY ARROGANCE, I TRIED TO ABSORB THE POWERS OF THE CHAOS EMERALDS...
...AND I WAS TRANSFORMED. I WAS NO MERE *"PERSON."* I WAS A **GOD.**
AS *ENERJAK,* I THOUGHT MYSELF UNSTOPPABLE. I WOULD HAVE CONQUERED ALL OF MOBIUS!
...BUT MY POWER WAS STOLEN. CENTURIES OF AGING CAUGHT UP WITH ME. I WAS NEARLY UNDONE...
UNTIL THE *DARK LEGION* RESCUED ME WITH THEIR CYBERNETIC PROCESSES.


IT WAS NOT A PERFECT SOLUTION, HOWEVER. WITH MY LIFE STILL EBBING AWAY, I ALLOWED *DR. FINITEVUS* TO DISASSEMBLE ME IN HOPES OF FINDING A WAY TO RETURN ME TO MY FORMER POWER.
AND YOU TRUSTED HIM WITH YOUR LIFE?
TRY TO UNDERSTAND, PRINCESS. AT THAT POINT, I WAS *DESPERATE*. I THOUGHT HE WAS GENUINELY LOYAL LIKE THE REST OF THE DARK LEGION.
SO IF YOU'RE NOT GOING TO BE ENERJAK, WHO IS?
I DO NOT KNOW, SIR CHARLES. I CAME LOOKING FOR AID THE MOMENT I REALIZED FINITEVUS HAD BETRAYED ME.
YET, I HADN'T ANTICIPATED THAT THE LAST BASTION OF *"FREEDOM"* ON MOBIUS WOULD BE SO SLOW TO ACT.
MY FIRST CONCERN IS MY PEOPLE. WE'RE NOT GOING TO RUSH TO ARMS WITHOUT A SOLID PLAN.


AS A FIELD LEADER, I CAN TELL YOU THAT THE FREEDOM FIGHTERS ARE READY AND WILLING TO GO TO ANGEL ISLAND AT A MOMENT'S NOTICE.
PRECISELY. STOP THIS MADNESS BEFORE IT BEGINS.
BUT LIKE KING ELIAS SAID, WE DON'T WANT YOU GOING WITHOUT EVERY ADVANTAGE. WE CAN ONLY SPREAD NICOLE AND HER NANITES SO THIN.
DYLAN, WHO SAYS WE NEED TO BE PROTECTED--?
THEN SEND THE CHAOTIX. THEY CLAIM ANGEL ISLAND AS THEIR HOME.
IT'S TRUE THAT THE CHAOTIX ARE FREE AGENTS...
BUT...?
...THEY'VE RISKED THEIR LIVES FOR MY PEOPLE. THEY'RE ENTITLED TO OUR PROTECTION AS MUCH AS ANYBODY ELSE.

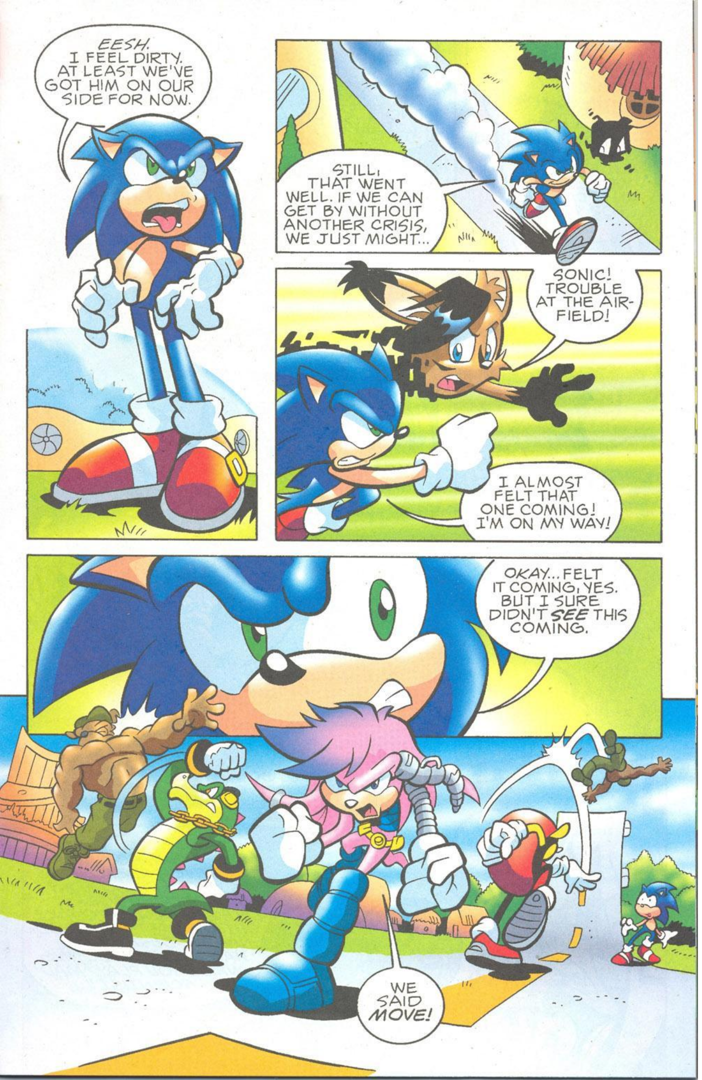

HEY, JULIE-SU? IT DOESN'T SOUND LIKE THE COUNCIL IS GONNA LET US LOOK FOR KNUCKLES.
I THOUGHT AS MUCH.
KEEP AT IT UNTIL DIMITRI LEAVES, THEN COME BACK TO US.
BAD NEWS?
ONLY FOR THEM, MIGHTY.
KNUCKLES LEFT FOR ANGEL ISLAND AND HASN'T CHECKED IN YET.* NOW WE'RE TOLD ENERJAK--KNUCKLES' WORST ENEMY--IS COMING BACK. AND THEY WANT US TO STAY HERE WHERE IT'S "SAFE"...?
*BACK IN STH #178.
JULIE-SU...
I KNOW THE CHAOTIX ARE YOUR TEAM, VECTOR. I'LL GO ALONE IF I HAVE TO!
CHILL OUT! WE'RE WITH YOU ON THIS ONE!
ALL RIGHT, THEN. LET'S GO GRAB A FLIGHT.

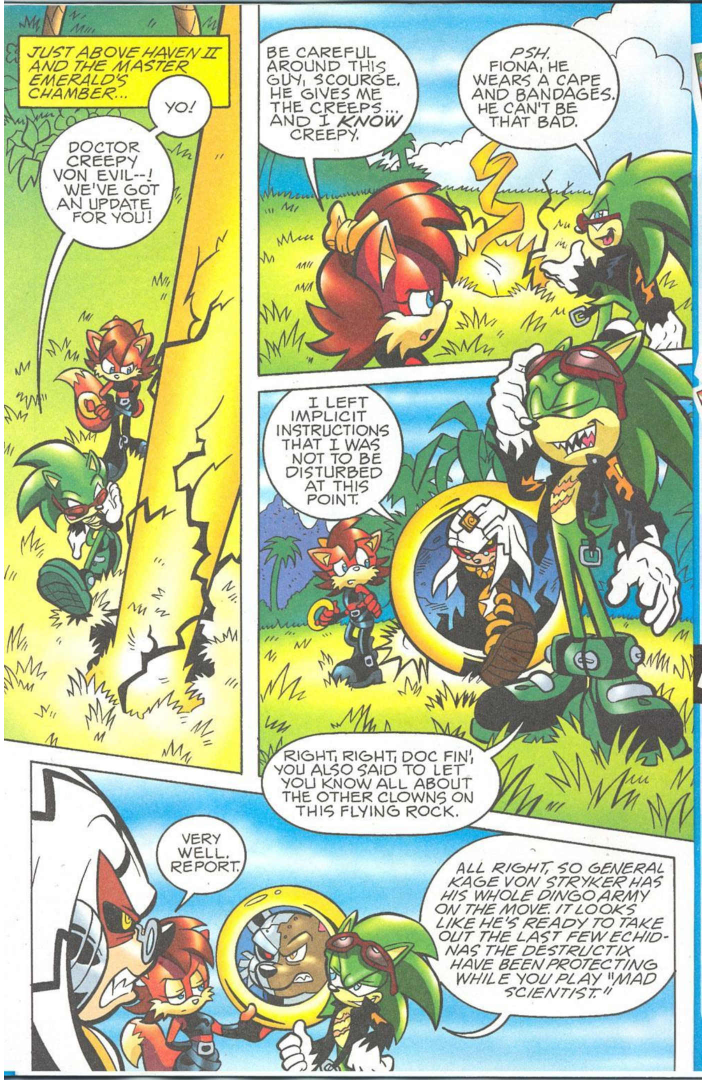


SO THAT'S THE DEAL-- CHAOS DEMIGOD LOOKING TO START TROUBLE, AND WE'RE FRESH OUT OF SUPER MAGICAL BAD GUYS TO DO THE DIRTY WORK FOR US.
...RIGHT.
HMM... I CAN'T ABIDE SOMEBODY THREATENING MY EMPIRE OR MY RIGHT TO DESTROY THE LOT OF YOU.
THE COUNCIL OF ACORN IS STILL FIGURING OUT OUR GAME PLAN, BUT WE'RE GOING TO NEED ALL THE HELP WE CAN GET. DO YOU SEE WHERE I'M GOING WITH THIS?
YES--AS MUCH AS I'M LOATH TO ADMIT IT.
SO WHAT DO YOU SAY, DOC? WE CALL A TRUCE UNTIL WE GET THIS ENERJAK GUY SETTLED?
COMBINE OUR FORCES... DEFEAT A BEING OF IMMEASURABLE POWER... HEH HEH --YES...
WE NEED TO PREPARE FOR THE WORST. FOR NOW, WE ARE ALLIES.

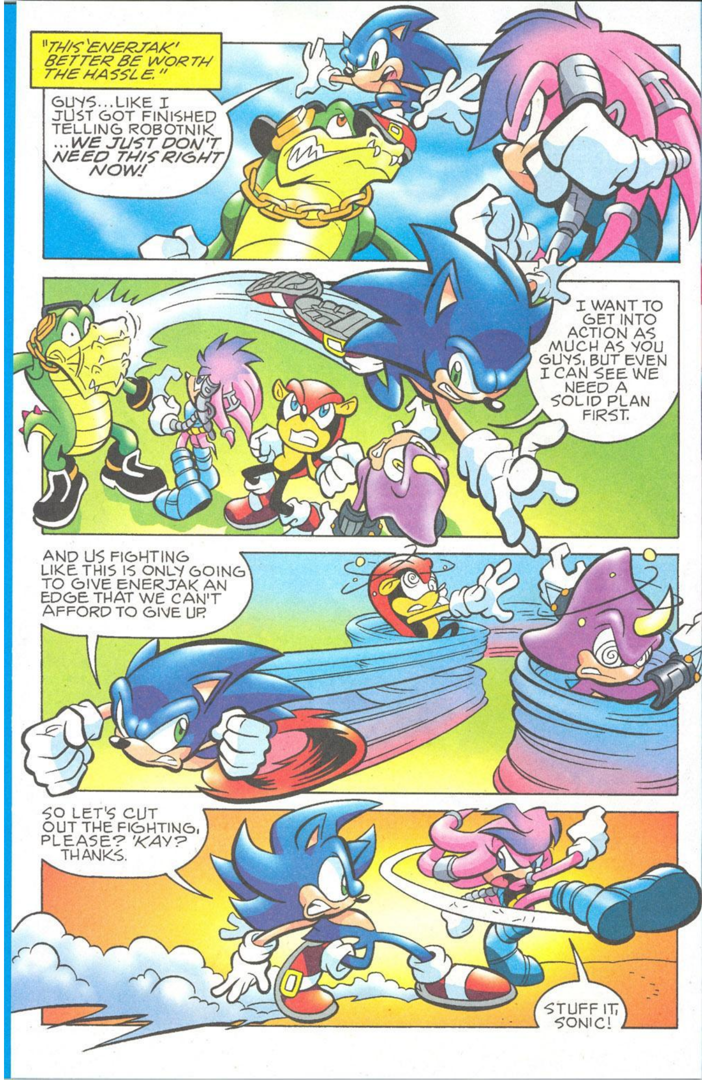


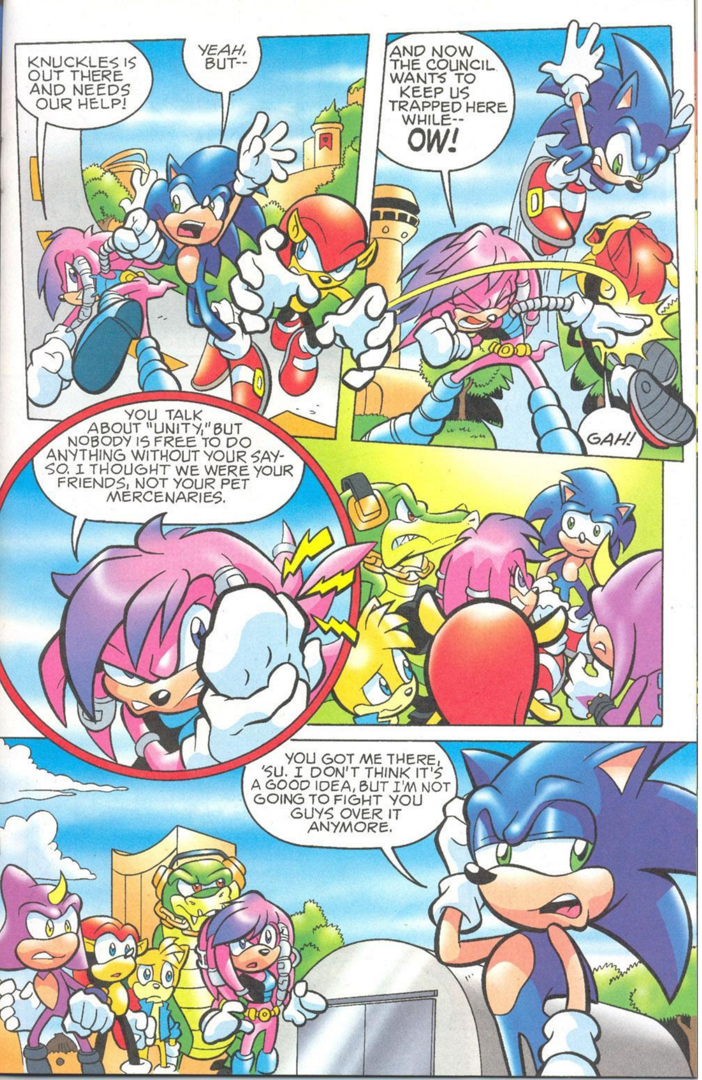
UH-HUH. AND LET'S TRY TO AVOID THE BACK-STABBING THIS TIME ...OKAY?
HRUMPH! YOU INSULT MY HONOR!
OH, PLEASE. EVERY TIME WE'VE HAD TO WORK TOGETHER, YOU'VE TURNED ON ME. THIS IS SERIOUS, DOC. YOU'LL HURT TOO, IF YOU MESS THIS UP.
PUT YOUR LITTLE RODENT BRAIN AT EASE. I'LL RETURN TO NEW MEGAOPOLIS AND PREPARE FOR THE GREAT BATTLE.
YOU DO THAT.
VWIP-VWIP-VWIP!
SNIVELY! I WANT YOU TO GET TO WORK ON SOME MODIFICATIONS IN THE LAST OF THE EGG GRAPES...

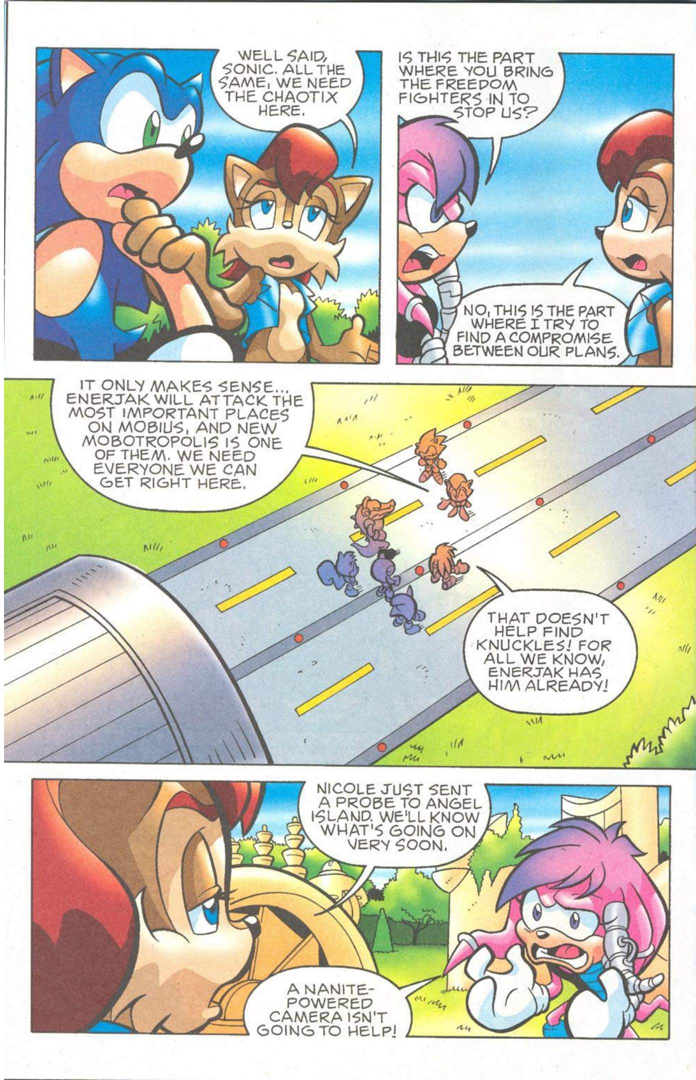

EESH. I FEEL DIRTY. AT LEAST WE'VE GOT HIM ON OUR SIDE FOR NOW.
STILL, THAT WENT WELL. IF WE CAN GET BY WITHOUT ANOTHER CRISIS, WE JUST MIGHT...
SONIC! TROUBLE AT THE AIR-FIELD!
I ALMOST FELT THAT ONE COMING! I'M ON MY WAY!
OKAY... FELT IT COMING, YES. BUT I SURE DIDN'T SEE THIS COMING.
WE SAID MOVE!


JUST ABOVE HAVEN II AND THE MASTER EMERALD'S CHAMBER...
YO!
DOCTOR CREEPY VON EVIL--! WE'VE GOT AN UPDATE FOR YOU!
BE CAREFUL AROUND THIS GUY, SCOURGE. HE GIVES ME THE CREEPS... AND I KNOW CREEPY.
PSH. FIONA, HE WEARS A CAPE AND BANDAGES. HE CAN'T BE THAT BAD.
I LEFT IMPLICIT INSTRUCTIONS THAT I WAS NOT TO BE DISTURBED AT THIS POINT.
RIGHT, RIGHT, DOC FIN. YOU ALSO SAID TO LET YOU KNOW ALL ABOUT THE OTHER CLOWNS ON THIS FLYING ROCK.
VERY WELL. REPORT.
ALL RIGHT, SO GENERAL KAGE VON STRYKER HAS HIS WHOLE DINGO ARMY ON THE MOVE. IT LOOKS LIKE HE'S READY TO TAKE OUT THE LAST FEW ECHIDNAS THE DESTRUCTIX HAVE BEEN PROTECTING WHILE YOU PLAY "MAD SCIENTIST."


MEANWHILE, IT LOOKS LIKE THE FLAME AND FROST LEGIONS HAVE CAUGHT ON. THEY'VE STOPPED FIGHTING EACH OTHER AND DECIDED TO ATTACK BEFORE YOU FINISH... WHATEVER YOU'RE DOING DOWN THERE.
HMPH. TWO ARMIES ARE NOTHING COMPARED TO THE POWER I'M ABOUT TO UNLEASH.
DEFEND THE ECHIDNAS--OR DON'T. IT DOESN'T MATTER AT THIS POINT. I'M ALMOST READY...
SEE? HE REDEFINES "CREEPY." WHAT ARE YOU DOING?!
YOU HEARD THE MAN...
WE'VE GOT NO STANDING ORDERS. I'M GOING TO CHILL OUT AND ENJOY THE SHOW.


"THIS 'ENERJAK' BETTER BE WORTH THE HASSLE."
GUYS... LIKE I JUST GOT FINISHED TELLING ROBOTNIK ...WE JUST DON'T NEED THIS RIGHT NOW!
I WANT TO GET INTO ACTION AS MUCH AS YOU GUYS, BUT EVEN I CAN SEE WE NEED A SOLID PLAN FIRST.
AND US FIGHTING LIKE THIS IS ONLY GOING TO GIVE ENERJAK AN EDGE THAT WE CAN'T AFFORD TO GIVE UP.
SO LET'S CUT OUT THE FIGHTING, PLEASE? 'KAY? THANKS.
STUFF IT, SONIC!


KNUCKLES IS OUT THERE AND NEEDS OUR HELP!
YEAH, BUT--
AND NOW THE COUNCIL WANTS TO KEEP US TRAPPED HERE WHILE-- OW!
GAH!
YOU TALK ABOUT "UNITY," BUT NOBODY IS FREE TO DO ANYTHING WITHOUT YOUR SAY-SO. I THOUGHT WE WERE YOUR FRIENDS, NOT YOUR PET MERCENARIES.
YOU GOT ME THERE, 'SU. I DON'T THINK IT'S A GOOD IDEA, BUT I'M NOT GOING TO FIGHT YOU GUYS OVER IT ANYMORE.


WELL SAID, SONIC. ALL THE SAME, WE NEED THE CHAOTIX HERE.
IS THIS THE PART WHERE YOU BRING THE FREEDOM FIGHTERS IN TO STOP US?
NO, THIS IS THE PART WHERE I TRY TO FIND A COMPROMISE BETWEEN OUR PLANS.
IT ONLY MAKES SENSE... ENERJAK WILL ATTACK THE MOST IMPORTANT PLACES ON MOBIUS, AND NEW MOBOTROPOLIS IS ONE OF THEM. WE NEED EVERYONE WE CAN GET RIGHT HERE.
THAT DOESN'T HELP FIND KNUCKLES! FOR ALL WE KNOW, ENERJAK HAS HIM ALREADY!
NICOLE JUST SENT A PROBE TO ANGEL ISLAND. WE'LL KNOW WHAT'S GOING ON VERY SOON.
A NANITE-POWERED CAMERA ISN'T GOING TO HELP!


WHICH IS WHY I'LL BE SENDING MY BEST AND BRIGHTEST ON A SEARCH-AND-RESCUE MISSION.
I LIKE THIS PLAN!
BUT THE COUNCIL OF ACORN...?
THEY VOTED AND GAVE ME CLEARANCE TO COMMAND THE FREEDOM FIGHTERS.
BETTER GET THE TORNADO READY TO GO, TAILS... IF THE CHAOTIX DIDN'T WRECK IT OR SOMETHING.
I'M ON IT!
I'M SORRY, SALLY. IT'S JUST... I'M WORRIED. YOU *WEREN'T THERE* TO SEE ENERJAK LAST TIME...
I UNDERSTAND BETTER THAN YOU THINK. NOW LET'S MEET UP WITH THE OTHERS.
RELAX, 'SU! KNOWING OUR LUCK...


"...WE'LL GET THERE JUST IN TIME!"
HERE YOU GO, GENIUS. YOU WANTED TO ENJOY THE SHOW.
SO SHUT UP ALREADY BEFORE I MISS SOME-THING.
RUMBLE
SSSSHHH
SSHHOOOOOOOOOOKM
S-S-S-SCOURGE ...?
...WHOA...


You HAVE to come back next month as the epic battle begins with
"ENERJAK: REBORN!"
FIND OUT WHO IS ENERJAK IN SONIC THE HEDGEHOG#181!


MEANWHILE, ON ANOTHER DAY AND ANOTHER ADVENTURE...
URGH . . . TAILS?
OOOOGH . . . I'M HERE, SONIC.
SONIC RUSH ADVENTURE
HIGH STAKES ON THE HIGH SEA
COOL. THEN THE NEXT QUESTION IS - -
- - WHERE IS "HERE?"
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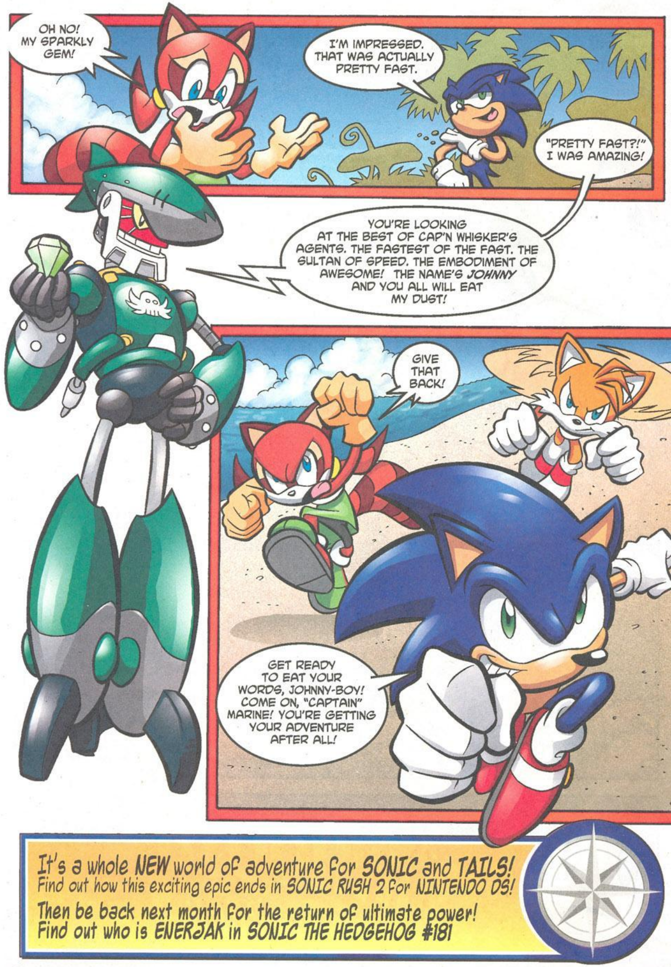


ONE LOUSY STORM AND WE'RE THROWN COMPLETELY OFF-COURSE.
AT LEAST WE'RE IN ONE PIECE.
AHOY THERE!
YOU GUYS TOOK A NASTY FALL. GOOD PULSE.
DID YOU SWALLOW ANY SEAWATER?
NO?
GOOD. THAT STUFF IS NASTY.
YOU TWO PASS WITH A CLEAN BILL OF HEALTH. NOW COME ON, ME SWABBIES! YOUR CAPTAIN IS SETTING SAIL FOR ADVENTURE!

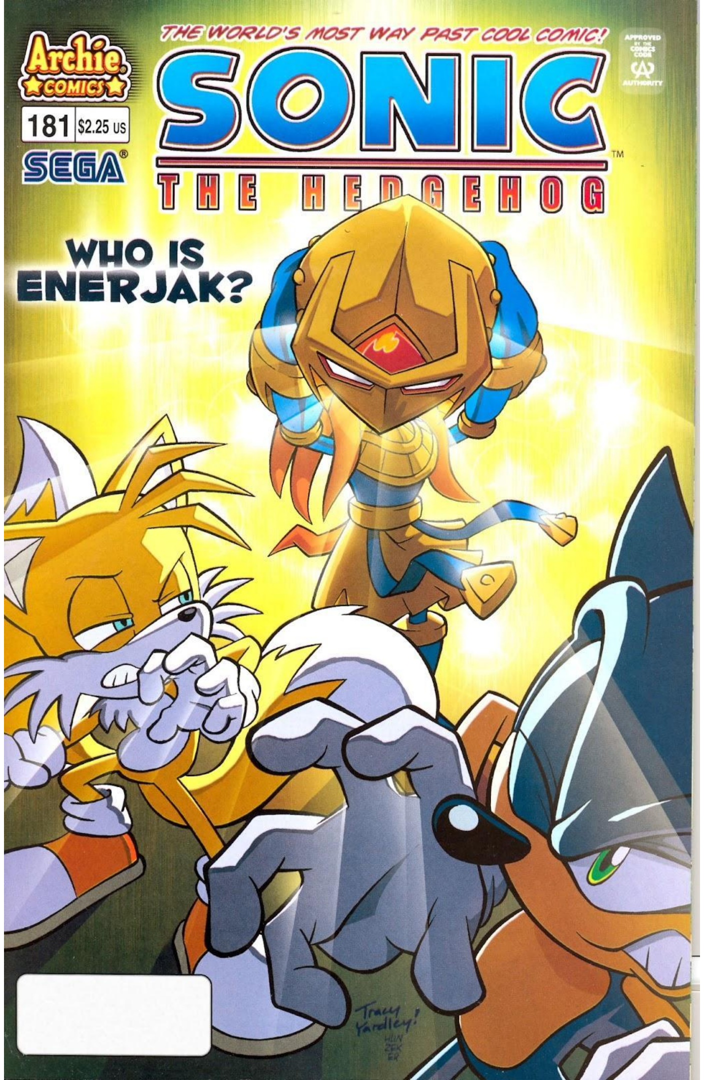


YEAH, NO. HOLD ON A SECOND.
EEK! MUTINY!
LISTEN, KIDDO, WE'RE KIND OF LOST AT THE MOMENT, AND WE DON'T EVEN KNOW WHO YOU ARE SO . . .
YOU'RE ON SEAGULL ISLAND! MY NAME IS MARINE AND I AM YOUR CAPTAIN AND YOU'RE ON MY CREW NOW.
NOW, LET'S SHOVE OFF! TO ADVENTURE!
YOU HAVE FUN WITH THAT. LET'S SEE HOW BAD THE PLANE IS, TAILS.
WELL... UM... WHAT KIND OF ADVENTURE?
WELL, FIGHTING PIRATES FOR ONE THING.
PIRATE FIGHTING YOU SAY?
JUST A FEW DAYS AGO A NASTY GROUP OF PIRATES CAME TO THE ISLAND. THEY'VE BEEN LOOTING THE ISLAND IN THEIR SEARCH FOR TREASURE!



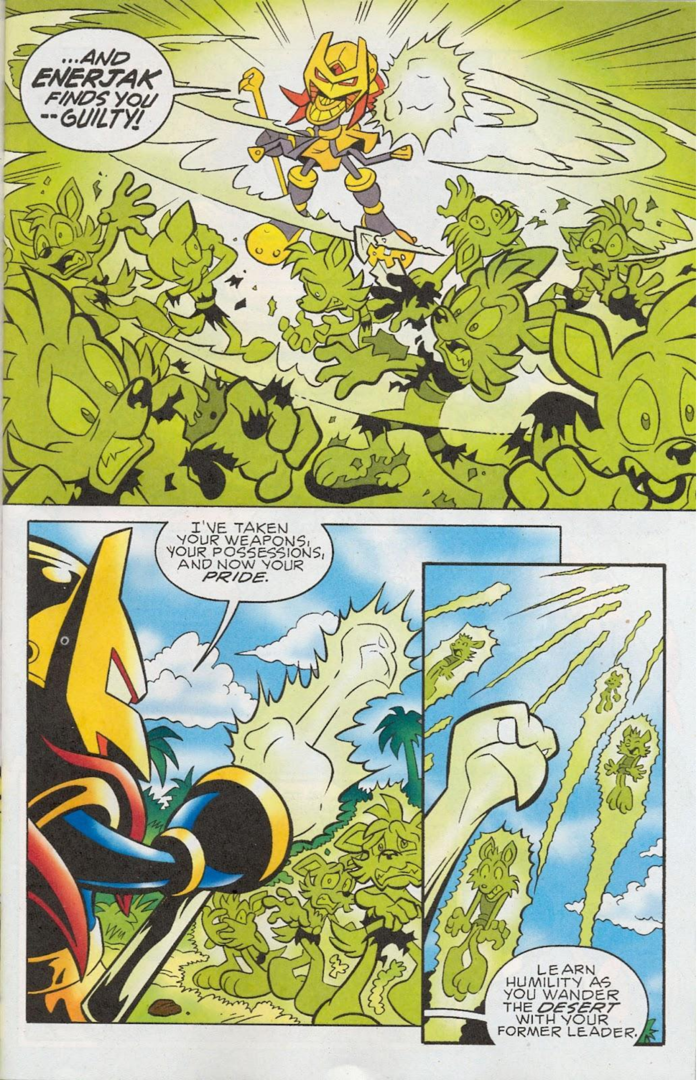


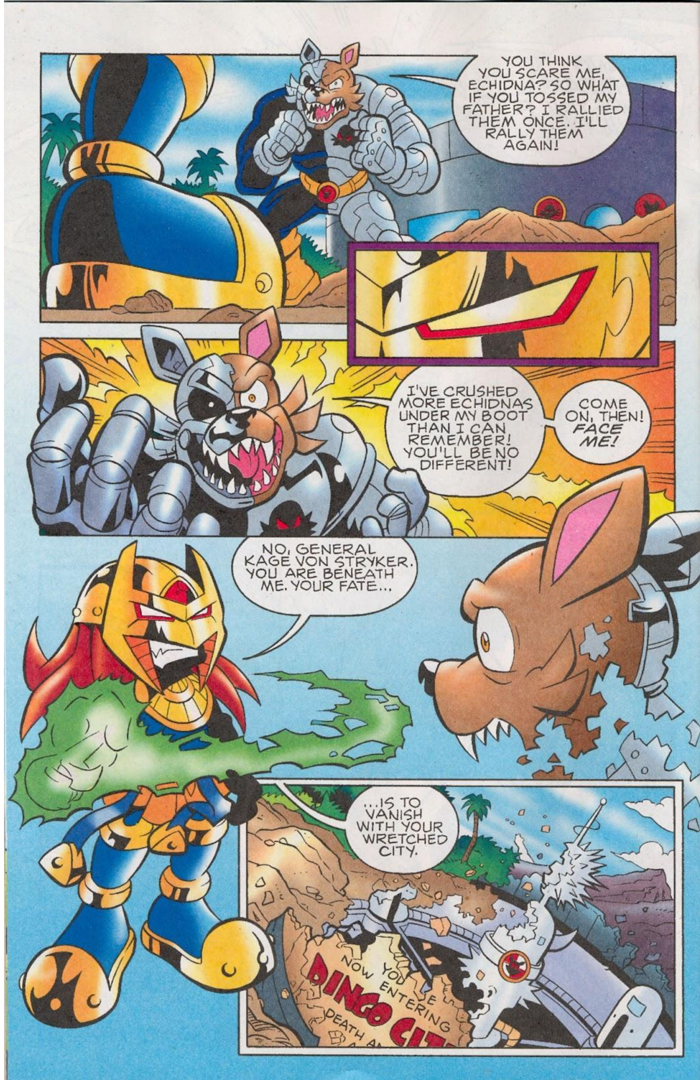
SONIC THE HEDGEHOG (issn:10705090), No. 180, Nov., 2007. Published every 4 weeks, twice in Feb., by Archie Comic Publications, Inc., 325 Fayette Avenue, Mamaroneck, NY 10543-2318. Richard H. Goldwater, President and Co-Publisher, Michael I. Silberkleit, Chairman and Co-Publisher. Single copies $2.25 in the U.S.; $2.65 in Canada. Subscription rate: U.S. $29.25 for 13 issues; $34.45 in Canada. All Canadian orders payable in U.S. funds. Periodicals postage paid at the post office at Mamaroneck, New York and at additional mailing offices. Title registered in U.S. patent office. POSTMASTER, send address changes to SONIC THE HEDGEHOG, c/o Archie Comic Publications, Inc., 325 Fayette Avenue, Mamaroneck, NY 10543-2318. Printed in Canada


Archie COMICS
181 $2.25 US
SEGA
THE WORLD'S MOST WAY PAST COOL COMIC!
SONIC THE HEDGEHOG
WHO IS ENERJAK?
Tracy Yardley!


ENERJAK: REBORN
CHAPTER ONE: RISING EVIL
STEP ON IT, TAILS. WE NEED TO GET TO ANGEL ISLAND AND FIND KNUCKLES--
--BEFORE ENERJAK DOES!
SONIC? TAILS? THIS IS NICOLE IN NEW MOBOTROPOLIS...
Writer: IAN FLYNN · Pencils: TRACY YARDLEY! Inks: JIM AMASH · Letters: JOHN WORKMAN Colors: JASON JENSEN · Editor: MIKE PELLERITO Managing Editor: VICTOR GORELICK Editor-in-Chief: RICHARD GOLDWATER
Special thanks to ROBERT LEFFLER, DYNA LOPEZ and CINDY CHAU at SEGA Licensing


...I'LL BE MONITORING YOU TWO FROM HERE. GOOD LUCK.
DOWNUNDA FREEDOM FIGHTERS, DO YOU COPY?
SOMETHING IS SCRAMBLING EVERYTHING I SENT OUT.
MONKEY KHAN, DO YOU COPY?
IT HAS TO BE ENERJAK! DID YOU NOT NOTICE THAT ANGEL ISLAND IS FLOATING RIGHT TOWARDS US? IF YOU'D ONLY ACTED AS SOON AS I--
WE WILL BE WELL-PREPARED FOR HIM, DIMITRI. THE PROBE I SENT TO ANGEL ISLAND HAS ARRIVED.
BEGINNING LIVE FEED NOW. JULIE-SU, CAN YOU TELL US WHAT WE'RE SEEING?
THAT'S CAVEM CANUS, THE DINGO CITY.
THEY'RE DOOMED.
YOUR CRIMES AGAINST THE ECHIDNAS HAVE BEEN MANY...


...AND ENERJAK FINDS YOU --GUILTY!
I'VE TAKEN YOUR WEAPONS, YOUR POSSESSIONS, AND NOW YOUR PRIDE.
LEARN HUMILITY AS YOU WANDER THE DESERT WITH YOUR FORMER LEADER.


YOU THINK YOU SCARE ME, ECHIDNA? SO WHAT IF YOU TOSSED MY FATHER? I RALLIED THEM ONCE. I'LL RALLY THEM AGAIN!
I'VE CRUSHED MORE ECHIDNAS UNDER MY BOOT THAN I CAN REMEMBER! YOU'LL BE NO DIFFERENT!
COME ON, THEN! FACE ME!
NO, GENERAL KAGE VON STRYKER. YOU ARE BENEATH ME. YOUR FATE...
...IS TO VANISH WITH YOUR WRETCHED CITY.
NOW YOU'RE ENTERING
DINGO CIT



YO, NICOLE! WE JUST PUT DOWN AT THE LAUNCH BASE. HOW ARE WE DOIN'?
POORLY. ENERJAK JUST OUSTED THE DINGO REGIME AND IS MOVING TO CONFRONT THE FROST AND FLAME LEGIONS.
WOW. THE GUY DOESN'T MESS AROUND.
WE'RE HEADING FOR THE CHAOS CHAMBER. I FIGURE IF KNUCKLES IS MOUNTING A RESISTANCE, HE'LL BE WITH THE MASTER EMERALD.
UNDER-STOOD. PLEASE HURRY.
C'MON, NICOLE, THIS IS ME WE'RE TALKING ABOUT. WHEN DO I NOT "HURRY?"
MAYBE WE SHOULD JOKE LESS, HURRY MORE.
ERM...YEAH. LET'S DO THAT.



CH-KAM
CH-KAM
KEEP HIM AT BAY, FROST LEGION! SHOW HIM THE PENALTY FOR STEALING MY BIRTH-RIGHT!
MY DEAR FRIEND, YOU NEVER WANTED MY POWER. YOU WERE PROUD OF WHO YOU ONCE WERE. IT IS A CRIME THAT YOU HAVE BEEN REDUCED TO THIS.
BE WHOLE ONCE MORE, REMINGTON!
FWASH!


M-MY M-M-MEMORY ... M-M-MY B-BODY...
RESTORED TO THEIR NATURAL STATE. JUST AS I'VE LIBERATED YOU FROM YOUR UNNATURAL CYBERNETIC PARTS...
FWASH
...SO WILL I LIBERATE THE REST OF THE FLAME AND FROST LEGIONS!
YOU MONSTER! THOSE PARTS ENHANCED US! IT'S NOT UNNATURAL...
...TO BETTER YOURSELF!
IF THAT IS HOW YOU...
...AND YOUR IDIOT FOLLOWERS FEEL...
...THEN YOU CAN STAY STRANDED HERE.
THOSE *THANKFUL* FOR MY BLESSING SHALL BE RETURNED HOME...

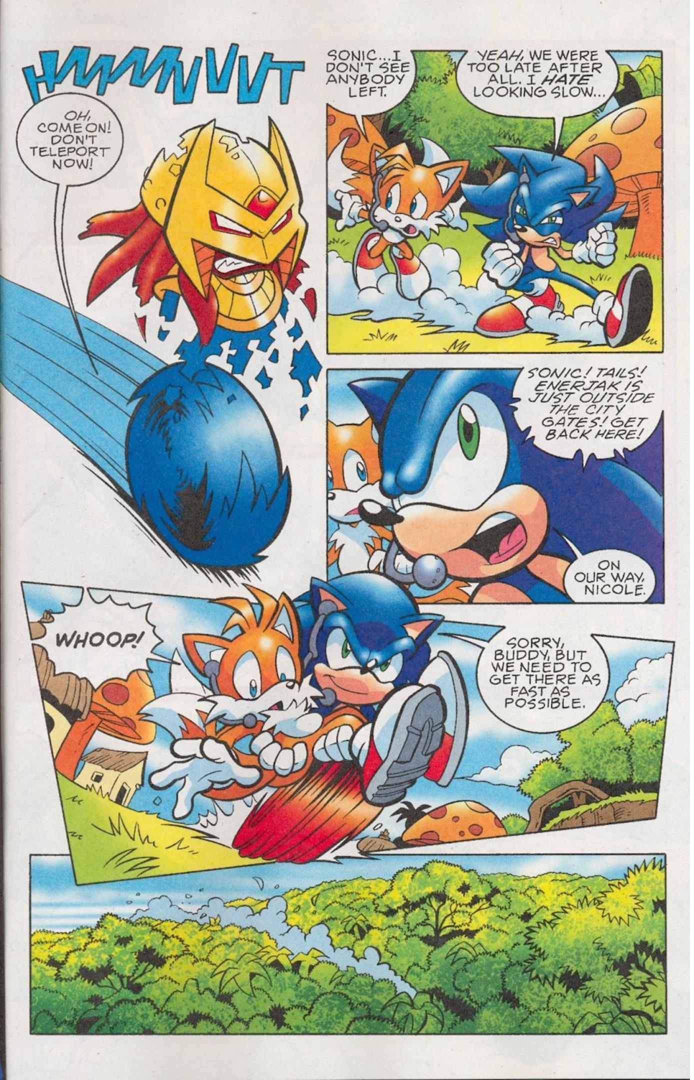

...TO ALBION.
DO SOMETHING! HE'S BRUTALIZING MY PEOPLE!
S-SALLY?
R-RIGHT! THERE'S STILL ONE CHANNEL I HAVEN'T TRIED YET!
YOU'RE THE A.I. THAT CONTROLS THIS CITY, AREN'T YOU? CONSTRUCT A WEAPON TO STRIKE NOW WHILE WE HAVE TIME!
I WILL NOT DEVOTE THE NANITES OR THIS CITY TO WEAPONS OF ANY KIND. SONIC AND TAILS ARE ON ANGEL ISLAND RIGHT NOW, AND...
NICOLE...
...HAVE THEY FOUND KNUCKLES YET?
THEY...HAD SOME TROUBLE GETTING INTO THE CHAOS CHAMBER. I SHOULD HAVE AN UPDATE FROM THEM SOON. I'M SURE HE...
THE LAST TIME KNUCKLES FACED ENERJAK, HE WAS VAPORIZED!* THIS TIME, THERE AREN'T ANY ANCIENT WALKERS TO RESCUE HIM!** SO WOULD YOU *PLEASE* TELL THOSE TWO TO PICK UP THE PACE?!
*SEE THE CLASSIC KNUCKLES THE ECHIDNA #8.
**AND REMEMBER WHAT HAPPENED IN STH #162?
I SHOULD'VE KNOWN BETTER THAN TO COME TO THESE "HEROES." IT LOOKS LIKE I'LL HAVE TO CAST MY LOT WITH THE MORE POWERFUL SIDE...


G.U.N. HEADQUARTERS, THIS IS PRINCESS SALLY ACORN! PLEASE RESPOND!
SPEAK UP, SWEETHEART! I CAN BARELY UNDERSTAND YOU.
ROUGE ?!
KEEP TALKING, SALLY. I'LL DO WHAT I CAN TO STRENGTHEN THE SIGNAL.
WE ARE BEING THREATENED BY SOMETHING WORSE THAN DR. EGGMAN. WE'RE CUT OFF FROM ALL OTHER ALLIES, AND WE NEED ANY SUPPORT YOU CAN SEND US!
HOLD THE FORT, PRINCESS. OUR NEWEST AND BEST AGENT IS IN THE AREA. I'LL SEND HIM YO-- KSSSHK!!!
WE'VE LOST CONTACT. THAT WAS OUR LAST OPTION.
AT LEAST WE GOT THROUGH TO SOMEBODY. IF OUR LUCK HOLDS OUT, THE BOYS WILL FIND...
YO, NICOLE! SONIC HERE!


I COPY. DID YOU FIND KNUCKLES ?
NO, THE DORK ISN'T HERE! WE'RE GOING TO HEAD FOR ECHIDNAOPOLIS. SEE IF ANY OF THE VILLAGERS KNOW ANY-THING.
UNDERSTOOD. WE'RE ALMOST OUT OF TIME.
I KNOW, I KNOW!
WE'D BE GONE ALREADY IF MR. PARANOID HADN'T HIDDEN THIS PLACE SO WELL...
WHAT IF KNUCKLES' FAMILY HASN'T SEEN HIM? WON'T THEY BE UPSET?
KNUCKLES CAME BACK HERE DAYS AGO.* I KNOW HE WOULD'VE STOPPED IN AT LEAST ONCE.
*SEE STH #178
"THEY MUST HAVE SEEN HIM RECENTLY."
OH, AURORA, NO...NOT AGAIN...


DO NOT FEAR THE RETURN OF ENERJAK. I'VE COME TO END THE YEARS OF PAIN AND STRIFE.
THE TECHNOLOGY YOU ONCE CLUNG TO HAS BEEN TAKEN FROM YOU. YOU HAVE BEEN THE PREY...
...OF THE DINGO REGIME.
BUT NO MORE!
DO NOT STRUGGLE, MY PEOPLE. I WILL SET EVERYTHING RIGHT...

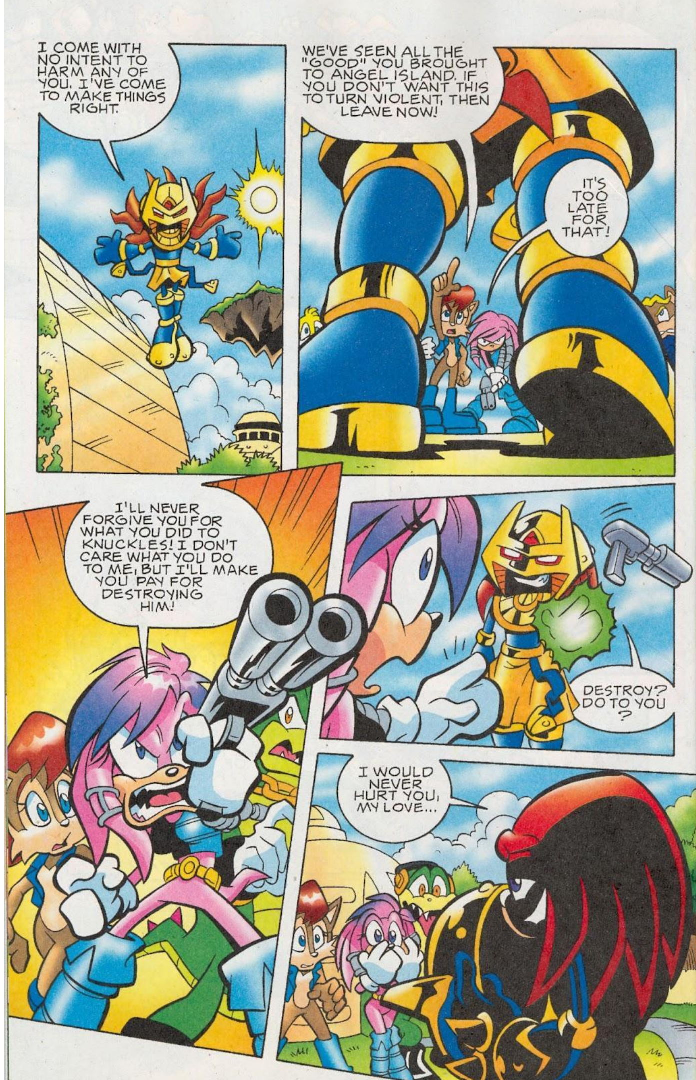

...ONCE I RETURN YOU ALL TO ALBION!
NO!
NOW...WITH ANGEL ISLAND STABILIZED, IT'S TIME I TOOK CARE OF MATTERS ABROAD.
NAMELY THOSE WHO THINK IT WISE TO SPY ON ME.
I'M VERY DISAPPOINTED WITH YOU. YOU SHOULD HAVE KNOWN BETTER.
AHHHH!
NICOLE ?!
HE'S COMING!


HMMNVVT
OH, COME ON! DON'T TELEPORT NOW!
SONIC... I DON'T SEE ANYBODY LEFT.
YEAH, WE WERE TOO LATE AFTER ALL. I *HATE* LOOKING SLOW...
SONIC! TAILS! ENERJAK IS JUST OUTSIDE THE CITY GATES! GET BACK HERE!
ON OUR WAY, NICOLE.
WHOOP!
SORRY, BUDDY, BUT WE NEED TO GET THERE AS FAST AS POSSIBLE.


WHAT ABOUT KNUCKLES? WE NEVER FOUND HIM!
KNUX IS THE TOUGHEST GUY WE KNOW. HE'LL JUST HAVE TO CATCH UP OR MISS OUT ON THE FUN.
BUT WE NEVER ACTUALLY FOUGHT ENERJAK BEFORE. DO YOU THINK WE'LL STAND A CHANCE?
AN OMNIPOTENT DEMIGOD OF CHAOS ENERGY? *PSSHT!* WE'LL BE DONE BY DINNER!



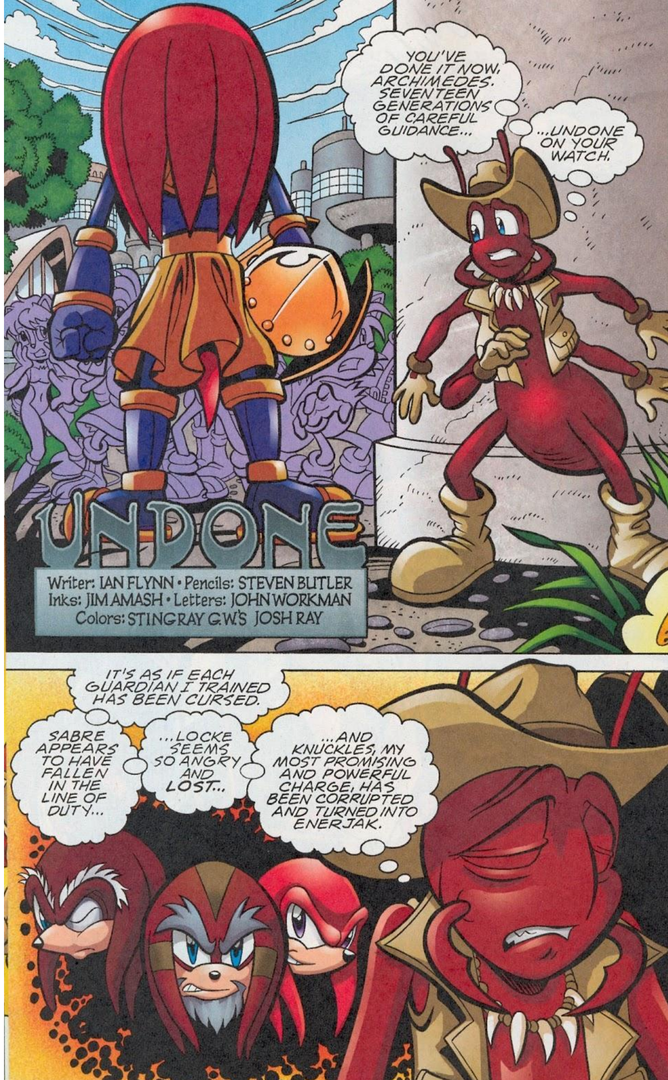
FREEDOM FIGHTERS AND CHAOTIX TO THE FRONT! ROYAL GUARD, SECURE THE KING AND ACORN COUNCIL! EVERYONE ELSE TAKE SHELTER!
UM... JULIE-SU? YOU OKAY?
NO, MIGHTY. I'M NOT.
SONIC AND TAILS NEVER FOUND KNUCKLES. ENERJAK FINISHED WITH ANGEL ISLAND. YOU KNOW WHAT THAT MEANS. KNUCKLES IS GONE.
STAY CALM, EVERY-ONE.
THE CITY'S FORCE FIELD HELD OFF THE FULL POWER OF THE EGG FLEET.*
*RECENTLY, IN STH #177.
KZZZKT



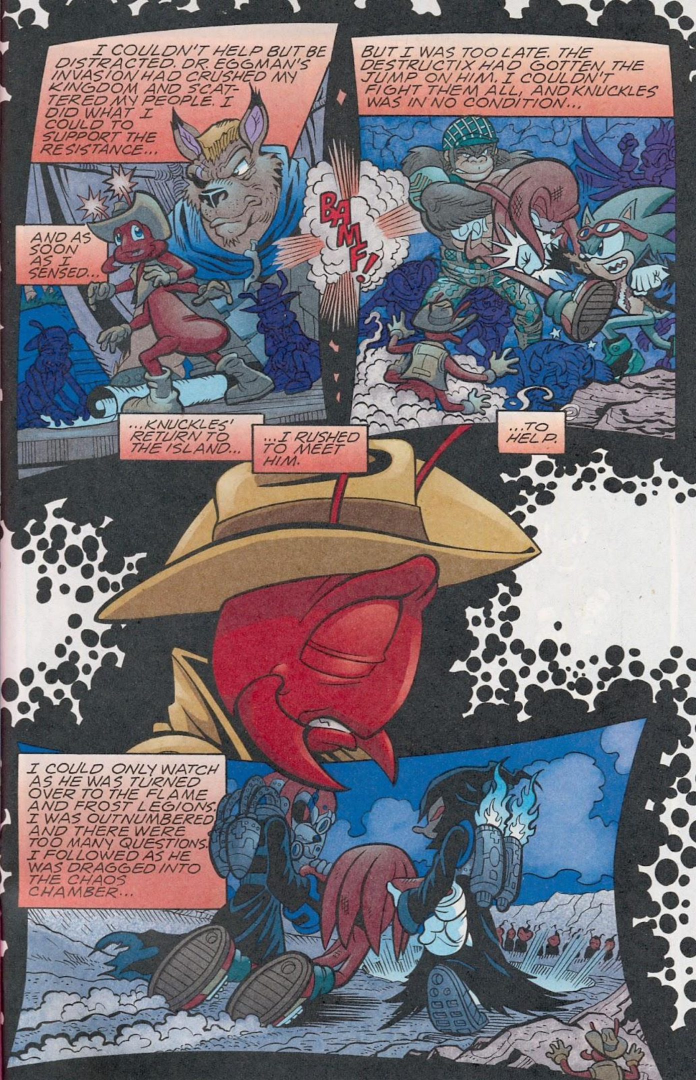
I COME WITH NO INTENT TO HARM ANY OF YOU. I'VE COME TO MAKE THINGS RIGHT.
WE'VE SEEN ALL THE "GOOD" YOU BROUGHT TO ANGEL ISLAND. IF YOU DON'T WANT THIS TO TURN VIOLENT, THEN LEAVE NOW!
IT'S TOO LATE FOR THAT!
I'LL NEVER FORGIVE YOU FOR WHAT YOU DID TO KNUCKLES! I DON'T CARE WHAT YOU DO TO ME, BUT I'LL MAKE YOU PAY FOR DESTROYING HIM!
DESTROY? DO TO YOU?
I WOULD NEVER HURT YOU, MY LOVE...



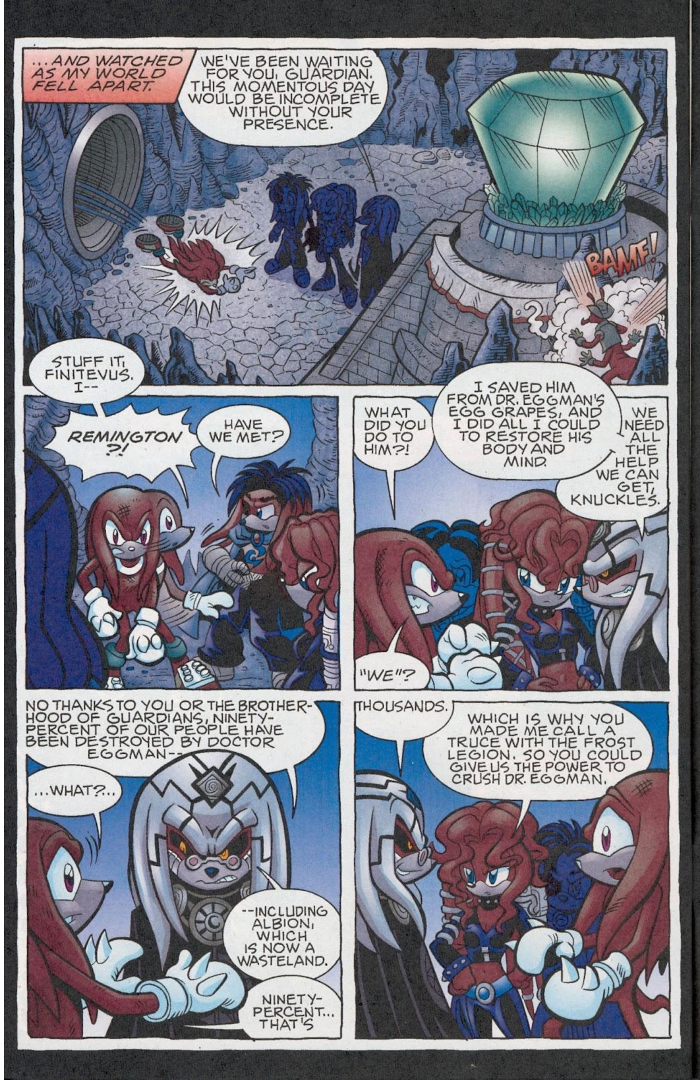
...AND I CAN'T VERY WELL DESTROY MYSELF!
KNUCKLES THE ECHIDNA IS THE DREADED ENERJAK?! SONIC AND TAILS ARE ON THEIR WAY, AS IS THE MYSTERY AGENT SENT BY G.U.N.!
COME BACK NEXT MONTH AS THINGS REALLY HEAT UP IN:
"FALLEN ANGEL"
THE STORY IS NOT DONE YET! TURN THE PAGE TO FIND OUT HOW THE GUARDIAN KNUCKLES TURNED INTO THE VILLAIN - ENERJAK!



YOU'VE DONE IT NOW, ARCHIMEDES. SEVENTEEN GENERATIONS OF CAREFUL GUIDANCE...
...UNDONE ON YOUR WATCH.
UNDONE
Writer: IAN FLYNN • Pencils: STEVEN BUTLER
Inks: JIM AMASH • Letters: JOHN WORKMAN
Colors: STINGRAY G.W.'S JOSH RAY
IT'S AS IF EACH GUARDIAN I TRAINED HAS BEEN CURSED.
SABRE APPEARS TO HAVE FALLEN IN THE LINE OF DUTY...
...LOCKE SEEMS SO ANGRY AND LOST...
...AND KNUCKLES, MY MOST PROMISING AND POWERFUL CHARGE, HAS BEEN CORRUPTED AND TURNED INTO ENERJAK.



I COULDN'T HELP BUT BE DISTRACTED. DR EGGMAN'S INVASION HAD CRUSHED MY KINGDOM AND SCATTERED MY PEOPLE. I DID WHAT I COULD TO SUPPORT THE RESISTANCE...
AND AS SOON AS I SENSED...
...KNUCKLES' RETURN TO THE ISLAND...
...I RUSHED TO MEET HIM.
BUT I WAS TOO LATE. THE DESTRUCTIX HAD GOTTEN THE JUMP ON HIM. I COULDN'T FIGHT THEM ALL, AND KNUCKLES WAS IN NO CONDITION...
BAMF!
...TO HELP.
I COULD ONLY WATCH AS HE WAS TURNED OVER TO THE FLAME AND FROST LEGIONS. I WAS OUTNUMBERED AND THERE WERE TOO MANY QUESTIONS. I FOLLOWED AS HE WAS DRAGGED INTO THE CHAOS CHAMBER...



...AND WATCHED AS MY WORLD FELL APART.
WE'VE BEEN WAITING FOR YOU, GUARDIAN. THIS MOMENTOUS DAY WOULD BE INCOMPLETE WITHOUT YOUR PRESENCE.
BAMF!
STUFF IT, FINITEVUS. I--
REMINGTON ?!
HAVE WE MET?
WHAT DID YOU DO TO HIM?!
I SAVED HIM FROM DR. EGGMAN'S EGG GRAPES, AND I DID ALL I COULD TO RESTORE HIS BODY AND MIND.
WE NEED ALL THE HELP WE CAN GET, KNUCKLES.
"WE"?
NO THANKS TO YOU OR THE BROTHERHOOD OF GUARDIANS, NINETY-PERCENT OF OUR PEOPLE HAVE BEEN DESTROYED BY DOCTOR EGGMAN--
...WHAT?...
--INCLUDING ALBION, WHICH IS NOW A WASTELAND.
NINETY-PERCENT... THAT'S
THOUSANDS.
WHICH IS WHY YOU MADE ME CALL A TRUCE WITH THE FROST LEGION. SO YOU COULD GIVE US THE POWER TO CRUSH DR. EGGMAN.





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SONIC
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DIRECT EDITION


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MY DEAR FRIENDS OF NEW MOBOTROPOLIS! I COME TO YOU AS ENERJAK, A LIVING GOD...
...TO SHOW YOU ALL HOW TO LIVE IN THE BETTER TOMORROW!
A TOMORROW FREE OF TECHNOLOGY!
A TOMORROW FREE OF PAIN AND SUFFERING!
A TOMORROW BUILT BY MY UNMATCHED POWER!
SONIC THE HEDGEHOG Hero of Mobius
ENERJAK Knuckles Turned Villain
JULIE-SU Soldier and Knuckles' Love
SALLY ACORN Princess & Field Leader
NICOLE Holographic A.I. Mobian


KNUCKLES, STOP THIS! YOUR "UNMATCHED POWER" BROUGHT DEVASTATION TO ANGEL ISLAND!*
*SEE ENERJAK'S RAMPAGE LAST ISSUE!
I KNOW YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH TECHNOLOGY HAS BEEN POOR, BUT IT CAN BRING GREAT THINGS! IT HAS GIVEN ME A CHANCE AT LIFE!
KNUCKLES, PLEASE... YOU TRIED TO USE POWER LIKE THIS BEFORE**, AND ALL IT BROUGHT US WAS PAIN AND SUFFERING. YOU'RE NOT ENERJAK. PLEASE... STOP THIS BEFORE IT GETS WORSE.
**THE EPIC STORY BEGAN IN THE CLASSIC STH #90.
I AM VERY DIS-APPOINTED IN ALL OF YOU.


I WILL SHOW YOU I AM RIGHT BY EXAMPLE IF I MUST.
KNUCKLES! WHAT ARE YOU--?!
I WILL LIBERATE YOU FROM YOUR OWN CYBERNETIC TRAPPINGS, JULIE-SU!
KNUCKLES ...DON'T...!
THEN YOU WILL SEE THAT I--
WHATEVER YOU WERE VILLAINOUSLY MONOLOGING ABOUT--
ERHN!
WHAM
--FORGET IT, ENERJERK!

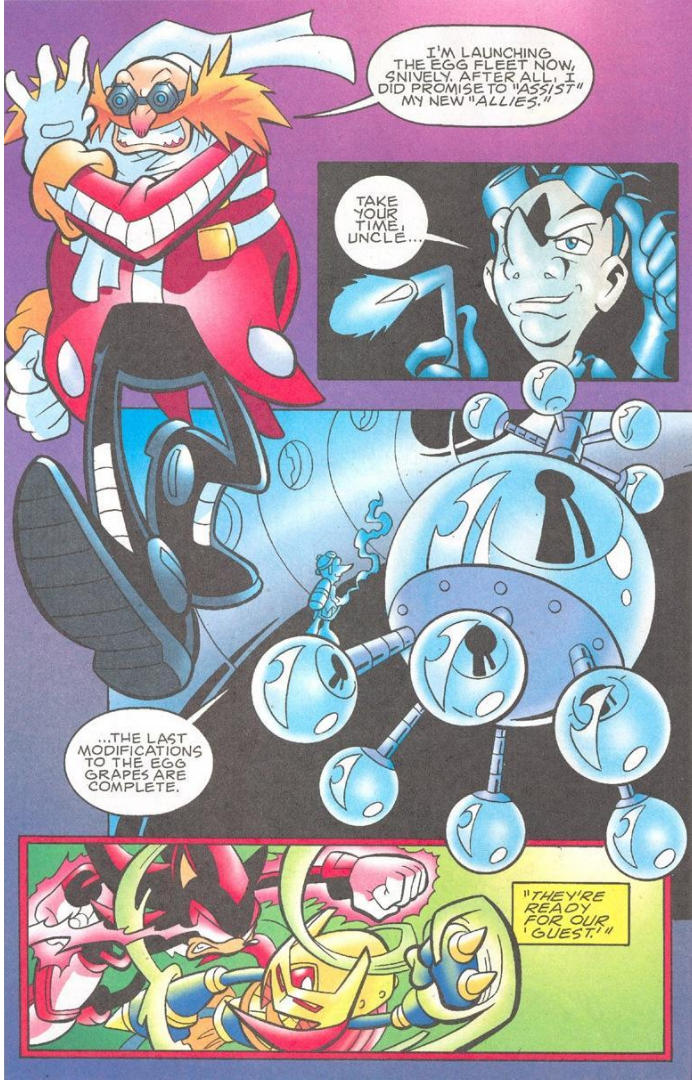

SORRY I'M LATE. HEARD FROM KNUCKLES?
N-YES, BUT...
COOL. ANY BACK-UP COMING IN?
YES, BUT--!
COOL. ALL THAT'S LEFT--
--IS TO TAKE CARE OF THIS ENERJOKE!
YOUR SPEED WAS NEVER ENOUGH TO TRUMP MY RAW POWER!
EH?
SHHRKKTT
AUGH!
ZOKT
THEN HE WILL NEED MY POWER AS WELL. SHADOW, AGENT OF G.U.N., REPORTING AS REQUESTED.
NICE ENTRANCE, FAKER. ALL I GOT OUT OF HIM WAS AN "ERHN."


SHAKAM
NOW LET'S SQUISH THIS ENERGERM--
WHOA! HEY!
ARE YOU QUITE FINISHED ?!
ACTUALLY...
JUMPING-JAK.
ENER-TUBE.
FLAP-JAK.
ENER-STATE.
ENER-JAK-IN-THE-BOX.
AND COME TO THINK OF IT...
..."ENERJAK" SOUNDS LIKE SOME KIND OF SPORTS DRINK.
NOW I'M FINISHED.
THE AMOUNT OF CHAOS ENERGY HE COMMANDS... IT'S AS IF HE WERE A LIVING CHAOS EMERALD.
CLEAR THE AREA! I AM REMOVING MY INHIBITOR RINGS AND TAPPING FULLY INTO THE CHAOS FORCE!
CHAOS...


...BLAST!
DARN IT, SHADOW! AT THIS RATE, THEY'RE GOING TO TEAR THE CITY APART!
I AM DIVERTING ALL THE POWER I CAN TO KEEPING THINGS INTACT, SALLY. BUT EVEN IF I FULLY SHUT DOWN MY BODY...
"...I DON'T HAVE ENOUGH POWER TO RAISE THE ENERGY SHIELD, IF DOCTOR EGGMAN WERE TO ATTACK..."

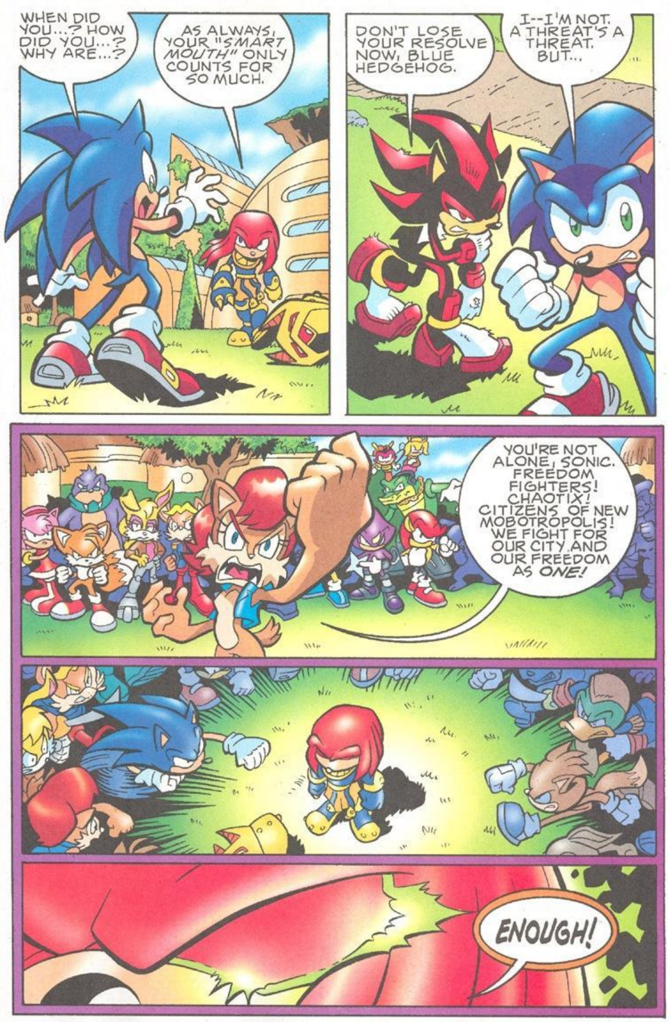


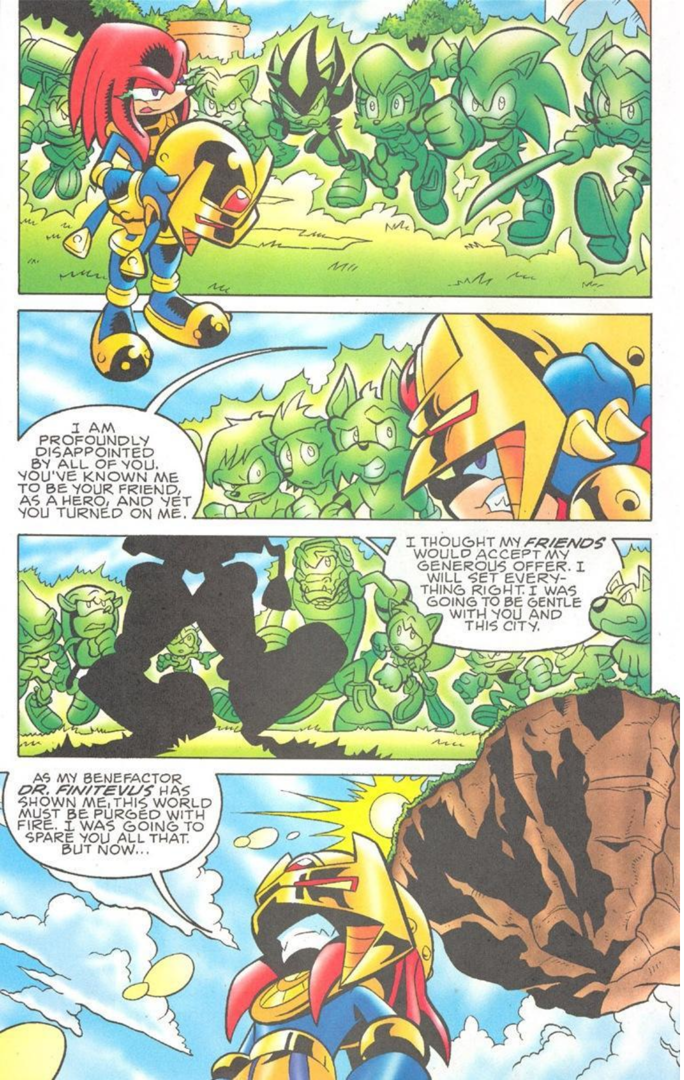
NEW MEGAOPOLIS-- DR. EGGMAN'S CITY.
"...WE'D BE DEFENSELESS."
WHOA-HO-HO-HO! TAKE IT EASY THERE, SHADOW! THAT'S MY CITY TO DESTROY!
IF SHADOW'S THERE, I TAKE IT THEY'VE FOUND A WAY TO BYPASS YOUR SIGNAL SCRAMBLING? SONIC MAY FIND OUT YOU LIED ABOUT THE WORLD TURNING ITS BACK ON KNOTHOLE.
BAH. THE COCKY LITTLE RODENT PROBABLY TUNED IT ALL OUT ANYWAY.*
ALL OF THAT IS MOOT NOW, ANYWAY! THIS ENERJAK FELLOW IS BRIMMING WITH CHAOS ENERGY!
*DR. EGGMAN HAD SOME HARSH WORDS DURING STH #175!
IT WILL BE MORE THAN ENOUGH TO POWER MY NEXT BIG PROJECT!
OF COURSE. HEAVEN FORBID YOU TAKE THE DIRECT APPROACH AND WIPE THEM ALL OUT RIGHT NOW...



I'M LAUNCHING THE EGG FLEET NOW, SNIVELY. AFTER ALL, I DID PROMISE TO "ASSIST" MY NEW "ALLIES."
TAKE YOUR TIME, UNCLE...
...THE LAST MODIFICATIONS TO THE EGG GRAPES ARE COMPLETE.
"THEY'RE READY FOR OUR 'GUEST.'"


ALL RIGHT, "ULTIMATE LIGHT SHOW," WE'RE ALL VERY IMPRESSED. NOW, HOW ABOUT WE WORK TOGETHER ON THIS GUY?
N-NO! I WILL NOT BE DEFEATED!
OH, BOY...
KRA-KOOM
THUNDER ARROW.
SHARA-KOOM
CHAOS SPEAR!
SKKZT
SWAT!
BOOM!
HEAD SHOT!
ANY MORE SILLY ATTACK NAMES YOU GUYS WANT TO--
--WHOA.


WHEN DID YOU...? HOW DID YOU...? WHY ARE...?
AS ALWAYS, YOUR "SMART MOUTH" ONLY COUNTS FOR SO MUCH.
DON'T LOSE YOUR RESOLVE NOW, BLUE HEDGEHOG.
I--I'M NOT. A THREAT'S A THREAT. BUT...
YOU'RE NOT ALONE, SONIC. FREEDOM FIGHTERS! CHAOTIX! CITIZENS OF NEW MOBOTROPOLIS! WE FIGHT FOR OUR CITY AND OUR FREEDOM AS ONE!
ENOUGH!



I AM PROFOUNDLY DISAPPOINTED BY ALL OF YOU. YOU'VE KNOWN ME TO BE YOUR FRIEND, AS A HERO, AND YET YOU TURNED ON ME.
I THOUGHT MY FRIENDS WOULD ACCEPT MY GENEROUS OFFER. I WILL SET EVERY-THING RIGHT. I WAS GOING TO BE GENTLE WITH YOU AND THIS CITY.
AS MY BENEFACTOR DR. FINITEVUS HAS SHOWN ME, THIS WORLD MUST BE PURGED WITH FIRE. I WAS GOING TO SPARE YOU ALL THAT. BUT NOW...

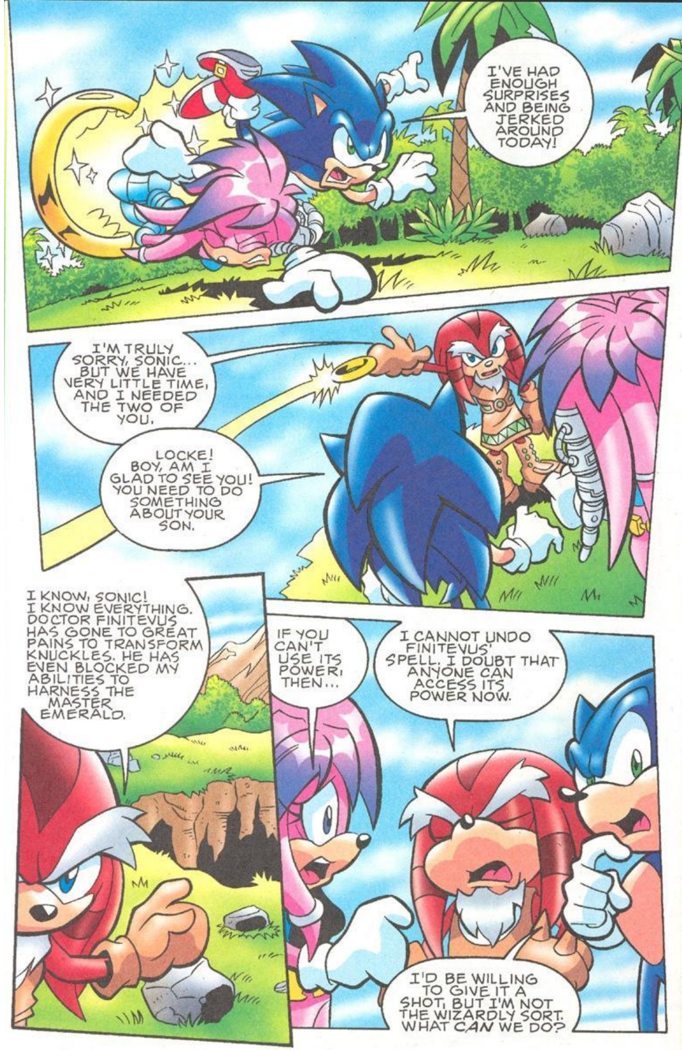


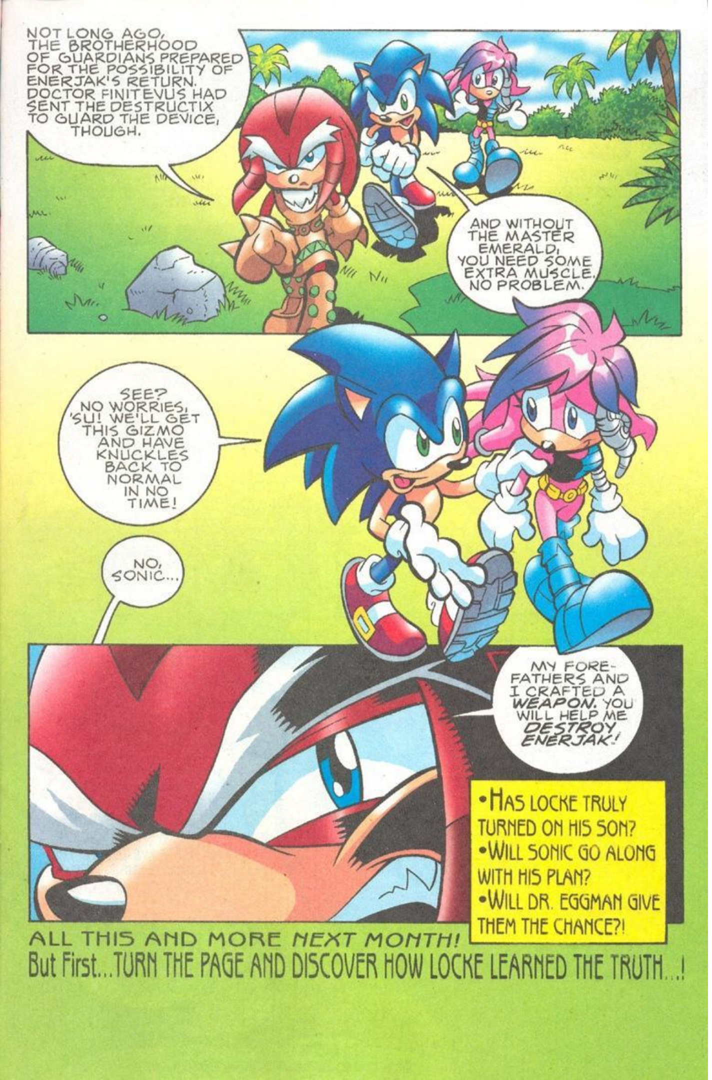
KNUCKLES, LISTEN TO ME! THIS ISN'T LIKE YOU, MAN! YOU ARE NOT LIKE THIS!
YOU'RE A ROUGH-AND-TUMBLE, PUNCH FIRST, ASK QUESTIONS LATER KIND OF GUY! RESHAPING THE WORLD WITH A BUNCH OF CHAOS-POWER HOCUS-POCUS JUST ISN'T YOU!
FINITEVUS MUST HAVE MESSED WITH YOUR BRAIN!
THE WORLD IS UNDENIABLY CORRUPT. I HAVE THE POWER TO CHANGE IT. THERE IS NOTHING THAT CAN SWAY ME.
I BEG TO DIFFER.


GOOD AFTERNOON, ENERJAK! THIS IS DOCTOR EGGMAN. RELAX AND LEAVE EVERYTHING TO ME.
I'VE PERFECTED THIS TACTIC TO AN ART.* MY TELEPORTING BEAMS WILL WEAR AWAY YOUR FUTILE AND INEVITABLE RESISTANCE...
...UNTIL YOU'RE FINALLY SENT TO MY EGG VINEYARD WHERE MY NEWLY-REFURBISHED EGG GRAPES WILL DRAIN YOU OF EVERY OUNCE OF POWER!
YOU SEE, RODENT? I KEPT MY END OF THE BARGAIN.
*FIRST USED TO TURN THE TABLES IN STH #164.


THANK YOU, CITIZENS OF NEW MOBOTROPOLIS! YOUR EFFORTS AS DECOYS MADE MY PLAN SO MUCH EASIER!
KIDNAPPING KNUCKLES WASN'T PART OF THE DEAL!
KNUCKLES, OR ENERJAK, IT'S ALL THE SAME! I RESCUED YOUR CITY FROM OBLIVION. IN RETURN, I GET THE BEST BATTERY A GENIUS COULD HOPE FOR!
NOW HURRY UP AND REBUILD. I WANT THIS PLACE SPIC AND SPAN WHEN I ERASE IT FROM THE MAP! MWA-HA-HA-HA-HA!

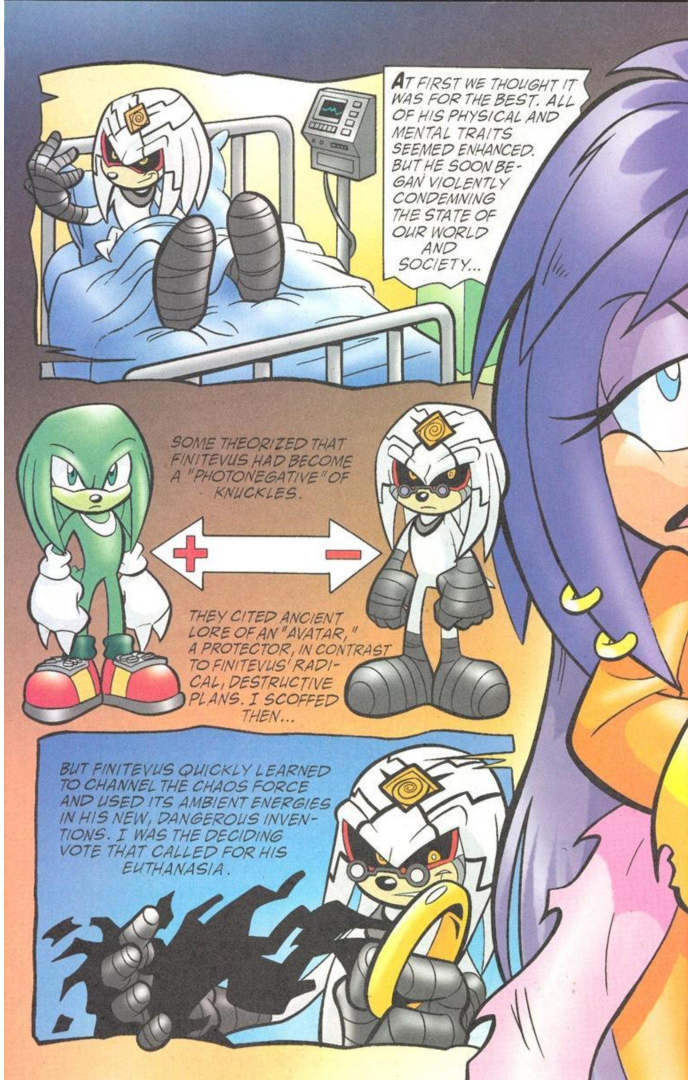

HUH. WELL, HE DIDN'T DIRECTLY DOUBLE-CROSS US, I GUESS.
OKAY, SALLY. WHAT'S THE PLAN TO RESCUE KNUCKLES?
SONIC... I DON'T KNOW. I'M NOT EVEN SURE IF WE SHOULD.
CARE TO RUN THAT BY ME AGAIN?
IT SOUNDS TERRIBLE, I KNOW. BUT RESCUING HIM RIGHT NOW MEANS UNLEASHING ENERJAK ON THE WORLD AGAIN.
BUT HE'S NOT ENERJAK!
HE IS, AND HE ISN'T. I KNOW LEAVING HIM CAPTURED ISN'T AN OPTION, BUT...
I THINK...
NOW WHAT?!
FWASH!
AAH!


I'VE HAD ENOUGH SURPRISES AND BEING JERKED AROUND TODAY!
I'M TRULY SORRY, SONIC... BUT WE HAVE VERY LITTLE TIME, AND I NEEDED THE TWO OF YOU.
LOCKE! BOY, AM I GLAD TO SEE YOU! YOU NEED TO DO SOMETHING ABOUT YOUR SON.
I KNOW, SONIC! I KNOW EVERYTHING. DOCTOR FINITEVUS HAS GONE TO GREAT PAINS TO TRANSFORM KNUCKLES. HE HAS EVEN BLOCKED MY ABILITIES TO HARNESS THE MASTER EMERALD.
IF YOU CAN'T USE ITS POWER, THEN...
I CANNOT UNDO FINITEVUS' SPELL. I DOUBT THAT ANYONE CAN ACCESS ITS POWER NOW.
I'D BE WILLING TO GIVE IT A SHOT, BUT I'M NOT THE WIZARDLY SORT. WHAT CAN WE DO?

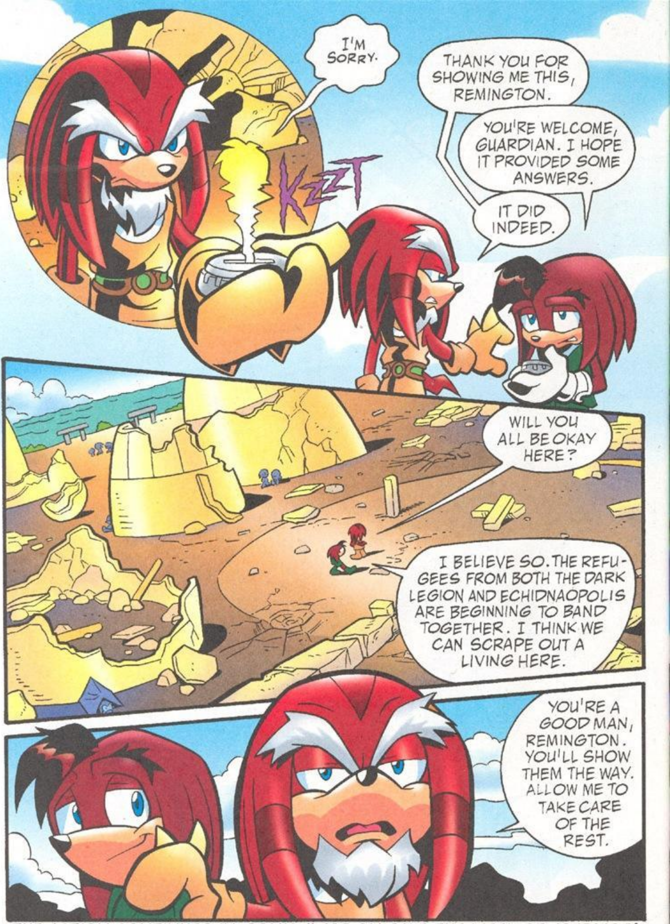

NOT LONG AGO, THE BROTHERHOOD OF GUARDIANS PREPARED FOR THE POSSIBILITY OF ENERJAK'S RETURN. DOCTOR FINITEVUS HAD SENT THE DESTRUCTIX TO GUARD THE DEVICE, THOUGH.
AND WITHOUT THE MASTER EMERALD, YOU NEED SOME EXTRA MUSCLE. NO PROBLEM.
SEE? NO WORRIES, 'SU! WE'LL GET THIS GIZMO AND HAVE KNUCKLES BACK TO NORMAL IN NO TIME!
NO, SONIC...
MY FORE-FATHERS AND I CRAFTED A WEAPON. YOU WILL HELP ME DESTROY ENERJAK!
•HAS LOCKE TRULY TURNED ON HIS SON? •WILL SONIC GO ALONG WITH HIS PLAN? •WILL DR. EGGMAN GIVE THEM THE CHANCE?!
ALL THIS AND MORE NEXT MONTH!
But First...TURN THE PAGE AND DISCOVER HOW LOCKE LEARNED THE TRUTH...!


ALBION'S SHAMEFUL SECRET
WRITER - IAN FLYNN PENCILS - TRACY YARDLEY! INKS - JIM AMASH LETTERS - PATRICK OWSLEY COLORS - JASON JENSEN
HELLO TO WHOEVER HAS FOUND THIS RECORDING. I BEG YOU TO LISTEN FOR I DO NOT HAVE MUCH TIME.
MY NAME IS GALA-NA, AND I WAS ONCE HEAD OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL OF ALBION.
I ONCE HELPED MAINTAIN THE FIRST AND GREATEST ECHIDNA SETTLEMENT ON ALL OF MOBIUS. WE WERE THE CRADLE OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY.
NOW ALL OF THAT IS LOST.


ONE CAN SAY IT BEGAN WHEN A YOUNG BOY NAMED KNUCKLES LOST CONTROL OF THE CHAOS POWERS THAT HAD BEEN ENGINEERED INTO HIM BEFORE BIRTH.
IT WAS DECIDED KNUCKLES HAD TO BE CONTAINED. PART OF THE OPERATIONS WERE HEADED BY THE PROMISING YOUNG CHAOS ENERGY SCIENTIST, DR. FINITEVUS, AND HIS CHAOS SIPHON SUIT.
DR. FINITEVUS BRAVELY ATTEMPTED TO RELEASE MUCH OF KNUCKLES' POWER. INSTEAD HE WAS BATHED IN INTENSE CHAOS ENERGY. THE ENERGIES... CHANGED HIM.*
*SEE THE CLASSIC STH#94 FOR THE FULL STORY!


AT FIRST WE THOUGHT IT WAS FOR THE BEST. ALL OF HIS PHYSICAL AND MENTAL TRAITS SEEMED ENHANCED. BUT HE SOON BEGAN VIOLENTLY CONDEMNING THE STATE OF OUR WORLD AND SOCIETY...
SOME THEORIZED THAT FINITEVUS HAD BECOME A "PHOTONEGATIVE" OF KNUCKLES.
THEY CITED ANCIENT LORE OF AN "AVATAR," A PROTECTOR, IN CONTRAST TO FINITEVUS' RADICAL, DESTRUCTIVE PLANS. I SCOFFED THEN...
BUT FINITEVUS QUICKLY LEARNED TO CHANNEL THE CHAOS FORCE AND USED ITS AMBIENT ENERGIES IN HIS NEW, DANGEROUS INVENTIONS. I WAS THE DECIDING VOTE THAT CALLED FOR HIS EUTHANASIA.

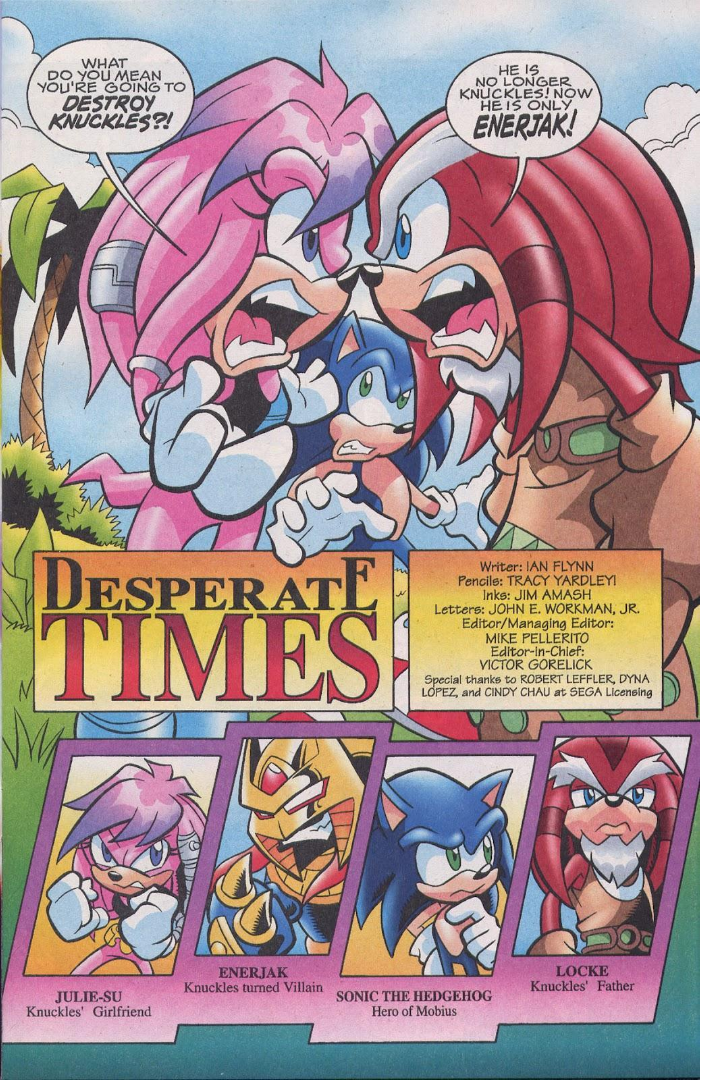




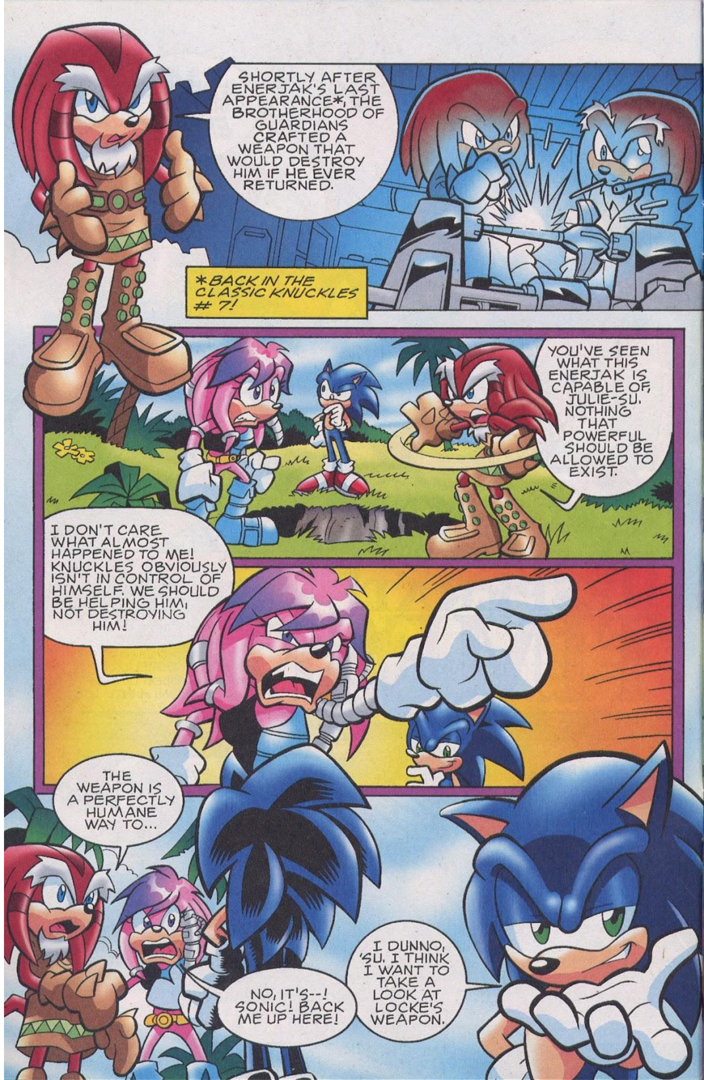
THE ACTION CONTINUES IN **SONIC # 183** ON SALE THE WEEK OF 12/31/07!
FOR MORE SONIC ADVENTURE : **SONIC X #26, SONIC THE BEGINNING,**
AND **SONIC ARCHIVES VOLUMES: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, & 6** ON SALE NOW!

SONIC THE HEDGEHOG (issn:10705090), No. 182, Jan., 2008. Published every 4 weeks, twice in Feb., by Archie Comic Publications, Inc., 325 Fayette Avenue, Mamaroneck, NY 10543-2318. Richard H. Goldwater, President and Co-Publisher, Michael I. Silberkleit, Chairman and Co-Publisher. Single copies $2.25 in the U.S.; $2.65 in Canada. Subscription rate: U.S. $29.25 for 13 issues; $34.45 in Canada. All Canadian orders payable in U.S. funds. Periodicals postage paid at the post office at Mamaroneck, New York and at additional mailing offices. Title registered in U.S. patent office. POSTMASTER, send address changes to SONIC THE HEDGEHOG, c/o Archie Comic Publications, Inc., 325 Fayette Avenue, Mamaroneck, NY 10543-2318. Printed in Canada


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...AGAINST ULTIMATE POWER?
DIRECT EDITION
Tracy Yardley!
HUN ZEK ER

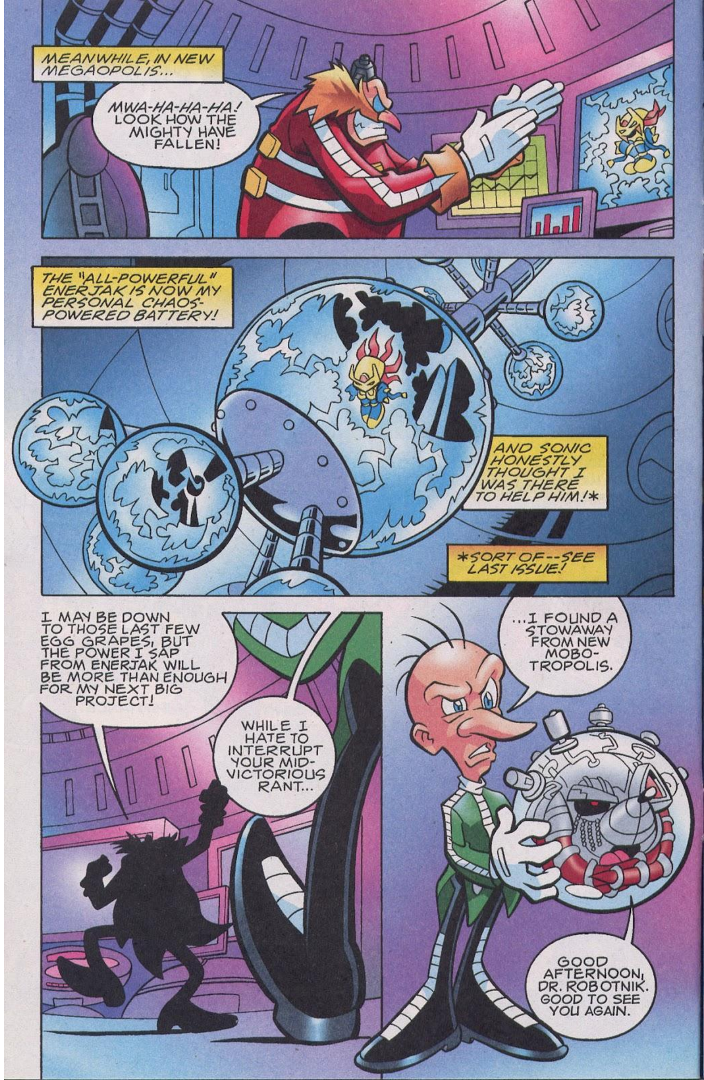


WHAT DO YOU MEAN YOU'RE GOING TO DESTROY KNUCKLES?!
HE IS NO LONGER KNUCKLES! NOW HE IS ONLY ENERJAK!
DESPERATE TIMES
Writer: IAN FLYNN
Pencils: TRACY YARDLEY!
Inks: JIM AMASH
Letters: JOHN E. WORKMAN, JR.
Editor/Managing Editor: MIKE PELLERITO
Editor-in-Chief: VICTOR GORELICK
Special thanks to ROBERT LEFFLER, DYNA LOPEZ, and CINDY CHAU at SEGA Licensing
JULIE-SU
Knuckles' Girlfriend
ENERJAK
Knuckles turned Villain
SONIC THE HEDGEHOG
Hero of Mobius
LOCKE
Knuckles' Father



SHORTLY AFTER ENERJAK'S LAST APPEARANCE*, THE BROTHERHOOD OF GUARDIANS CRAFTED A WEAPON THAT WOULD DESTROY HIM IF HE EVER RETURNED.
*BACK IN THE CLASSIC KNUCKLES #7!
YOU'VE SEEN WHAT THIS ENERJAK IS CAPABLE OF, JULIE-SU. NOTHING THAT POWERFUL SHOULD BE ALLOWED TO EXIST.
I DON'T CARE WHAT ALMOST HAPPENED TO ME! KNUCKLES OBVIOUSLY ISN'T IN CONTROL OF HIMSELF. WE SHOULD BE HELPING HIM, NOT DESTROYING HIM!
THE WEAPON IS A PERFECTLY HUMANE WAY TO...
NO, IT'S--! SONIC! BACK ME UP HERE!
I DUNNO, 'SU. I THINK I WANT TO TAKE A LOOK AT LOCKE'S WEAPON.


WHAT?!
VERY GOOD, THEN.
I WILL TRY TO PUT US AS CLOSE TO THE RUINS OF THE GRAND CONSERVATORY AS POSSIBLE.
I WON'T LET YOU DO THIS.
OH, I THINK YOU WILL.
THE WEAPON IS HIDDEN THERE. I PRAY WE DON'T RUN INTO ANY--
PREDATOR HAWK
SGT. SIMIAN
FLYING FROG
SLEUTH DAWG
--RESISTANCE.
WELCOME BACK, OLD MAN. WHAT DO YOU WANT SAID IN YOUR EULOGY?
DRAGO WOLF
FIONA FOX
SCOURGE THE HEDGEHOG
LIGHTNING LYNX

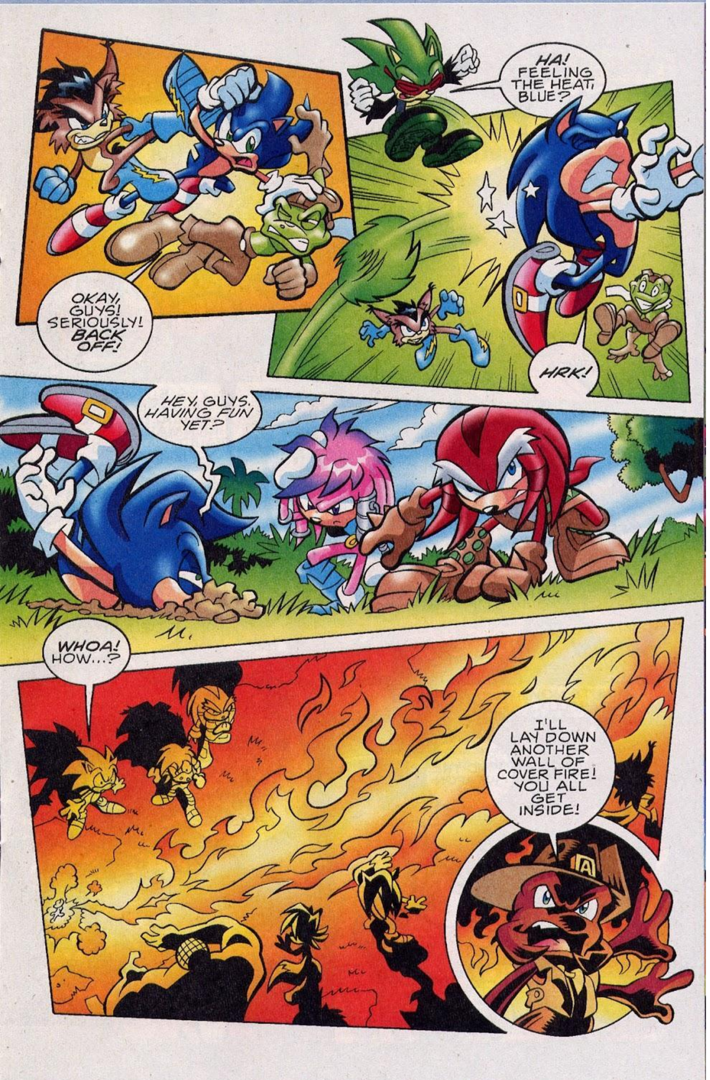

MEANWHILE, IN NEW MEGAOPOLIS...
MWA-HA-HA-HA! LOOK HOW THE MIGHTY HAVE FALLEN!
THE "ALL-POWERFUL" ENERJAK IS NOW MY PERSONAL CHAOS-POWERED BATTERY!
AND SONIC HONESTLY THOUGHT I WAS THERE TO HELP HIM!*
*SORT OF--SEE LAST ISSUE!
I MAY BE DOWN TO THOSE LAST FEW EGG GRAPES, BUT THE POWER I SAP FROM ENERJAK WILL BE MORE THAN ENOUGH FOR MY NEXT BIG PROJECT!
WHILE I HATE TO INTERRUPT YOUR MID-VICTORIOUS RANT...
...I FOUND A STOWAWAY FROM NEW MOBO-TROPOLIS.
GOOD AFTERNOON, DR. ROBOTNIK. GOOD TO SEE YOU AGAIN.


SNIVELY, WHAT IS THAT THING?
IT IS I, DIMITRI! I SUPPOSE I LOOK LESS... PUT TOGETHER THAN LAST WE MET. I COME TO OFFER MY HELP.
YOU HELP ME?
YES. I TRIED TO WARN SONIC AND THE COUNCIL OF ACORN,* BUT THEY WERE TOO SLOW TO ACT.
*BACK IN STH #180-181
WHEN YOUR EGG FLEET CAME TO NEW MOBO-TROPOLIS, I LEFT THE FOOLS TO THEIR LOT...
DECIDED TO JOIN THE WINNING TEAM, EH?
...AS IT WERE, YES.
WITH MY HELP, WE MAY BE ABLE TO DE-POWER ENERJAK BEFORE HIS DISORIENTATION WEARS OFF!
...TUT-TUT! AS YOU CAN SEE...
...EVERYTHING IS UNDER CONTROL!
RRRRR RRGH!

S-SIR, WE'RE READING A SUDDEN SURGE IN ENERGY!
ARE YOU DOUBTING THE ABILITY OF MY EGG GRAPES, SNIVELY?
ENERGY OUTPUT
SWEET MERCIFUL AURORA! HE'S AWAKE!
RAAAGH!
SHAKOOM!
HOW DARE HE DAMAGE MY CITY!
SNIVELY, PREP MY EGG MOBILE! I'LL BE SENDING THE EGG FLEET IN!
SURE, AND THEN I'M GOING TO THE BUNKER!
I TOLD YOU! I TOLD YOU!


NOW NO ONE CAN STOP ENERJAK!
I SHOULD HAVE KNOWN BETTER WHEN DR. FINITEVUS SAID YOU WERE REFORMED MERCENARIES!*
*BACK IN STH # 171 REMEMBER?
WE'VE TAKEN YOU DESTRUCTIX DOWN BEFORE!
YEAH? WAS THERE A TIME WHEN WE WEREN'T OUTNUMBERED OR UNDER ORDERS TO LET YOU WIN?
THIS IS SAD, EVEN FOR YOU. THE DESTRUCTIX ARE A JOKE!
THERE'RE PERKS TO BEING PART OF A TEAM...
OOF!
...ESPECIALLY WHEN THE JOKE'S ON YOU!


YOU'RE A GUARDIAN LIKE KNUCKLES, RIGHT? WHY DON'T YOU USE YOUR CHAOS POWERS ON THESE GUYS?
I CAN'T.
WHY NOT?
DR. FINITEVUS HAS BLOCKED MY LINK TO THE MASTER EMERALD, AND I'M NOT ABLE TO PULL FROM THE CHAOS FORCE LIKE KNUCKLES.
AND JUST HOW DID THAT CREEP GET CLOSE TO THE MASTER EMERALD?
I HAD TO FIND MY FOREFATHERS! IF KNUCKLES HAD ONLY PERFORMED HIS DUTY--!
AND THAT EXCUSES YOU FROM ABANDONING YOURS?!
AAH!
AUGH!


HA! FEELING THE HEAT, BLUE?
OKAY, GUYS! SERIOUSLY! BACK OFF!
HRK!
HEY, GUYS. HAVING FUN YET?
WHOA! HOW...?
I'LL LAY DOWN ANOTHER WALL OF COVER FIRE! YOU ALL GET INSIDE!


MOMENTS LATER...
REMIND ME--THE FIRE-BREATHING ANT IS...? ...?
ARCHIMEDES. A FORMER MENTOR OF MINE...
AND KNUCKLES!
AND A RECURRING VOICE OF REASON, I'D LIKE TO THINK.
BAMF
HELLO, OLD FRIEND. IS THE WEAPON SAFE?
YES, BUT WE WON'T BE USING IT, LOCKE. KNUCKLES' TRANSFORMATION IS OUR FAULT, NOT HIS. IT WAS YOUR GENETIC AND CHAOS-ENERGY EXPERIMENTS THAT GAVE KNUCKLES HIS POWERS.
WE PUT THE WORLD ON HIS SHOULDERS AND TOLD HIM TO BEAR IT. WE'RE AS GUILTY FOR CREATING THIS NEW ENERJAK AS DR. FINITEVUS.
THE DESTRUCTIX WILL BE ON TOP OF US ANY MINUTE NOW. WE SHOULD...
FIND THE WEAPON?
'CAUSE I DID THAT. WHAT? YOU GUYS WERE BUSY TALKING, SO I GRABBED IT.



HOLD IT, SONIC. DOCTOR FINITEVUS HIRED US TO KEEP YOU FROM USING THAT WEAPON ON HIS PRECIOUS ENERJAK.
OOOOOOOOOH! WELL, IF THAT'S THE CASE...
I HOPE YOU GUYS AREN'T PLANNING ON CHARGING FOR OVERTIME. ARE WE DONE HERE?
I--I SUPPOSE SO.
...DESTRUCTIX, FALL BACK.
PSSHT! IT WAS MY IDEA TO SMASH IT IN THE FIRST PLACE.
YOU IDIOT! THAT WAS THE ONLY OPTION WE HAD LEFT!!!



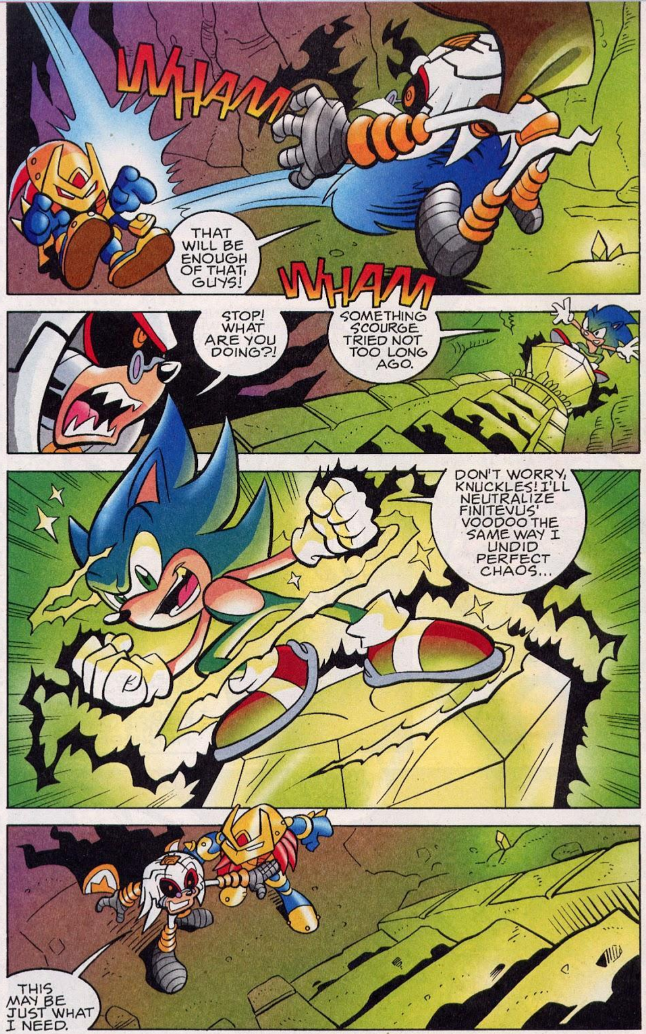
YEAH, SEE, I NEVER SIGNED ON TO YOUR PLAN OF DESTROYING MY BUDDY. NEVER MIND HE'S YOUR KID, SO I CAME UP WITH MY OWN PLAN.
WAIT! WHAT PLAN?
NO TIME TO EXPLAIN, 'SU! BUT I'LL GET RID OF ENERJAK AND GET KNUCKLES BACK!
IT'LL BE RISKY THOUGH. I'M ONLY GOING TO GET ONE SHOT AT THIS...
...AND I HOPE I'M NOT ALREADY TOO LATE.
KABOOOM!


ONWARD, BADNIK HORDE! VANQUISH ALL IN THE NAME OF THE EGGMAN EMPIRE!
SHA-KOOOM!
SIR, WE'VE LOST OVER NINETY PERCENT OF OUR GROUND FORCES. MOST OF THE OUTLYING CITY IS... GONE.
WE'VE... LOST.
NOT YET, SNIVELY. THERE'S STILL THE EGG FLEET.
THERE WON'T BE ENOUGH LEFT OF ENERJAK TO FILL A PETRI DISH.

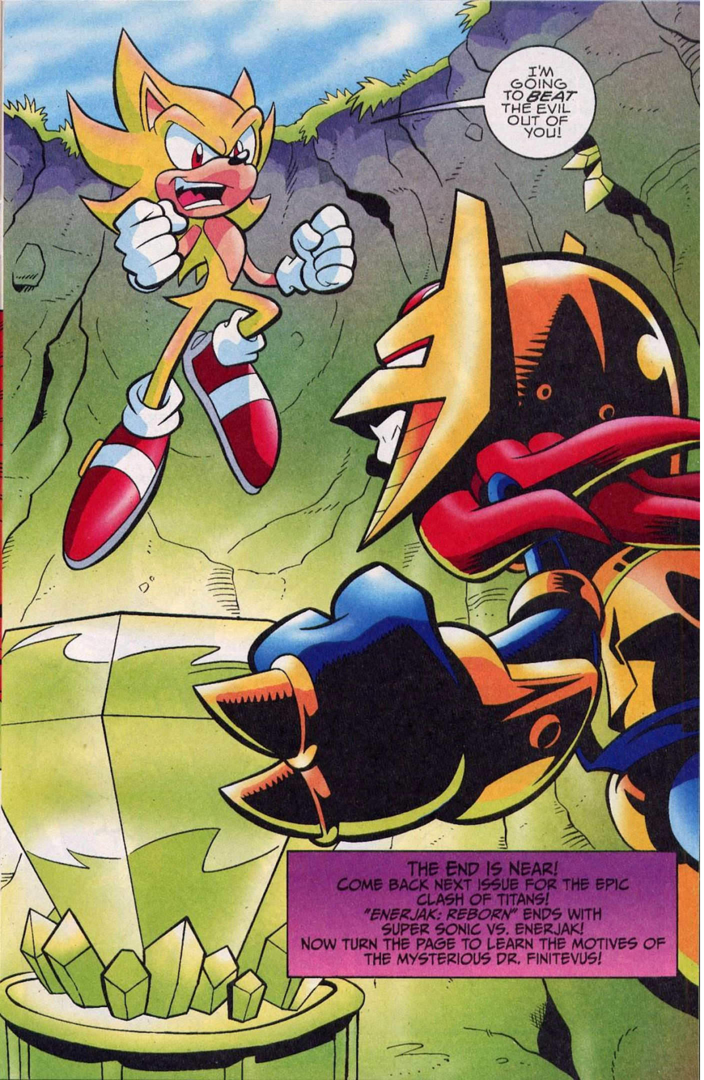

STOP!
RETURN.
DOCTOR, I THINK IT'S TIME WE GOT TO YOUR BUNKER.
I-I-I... YES.



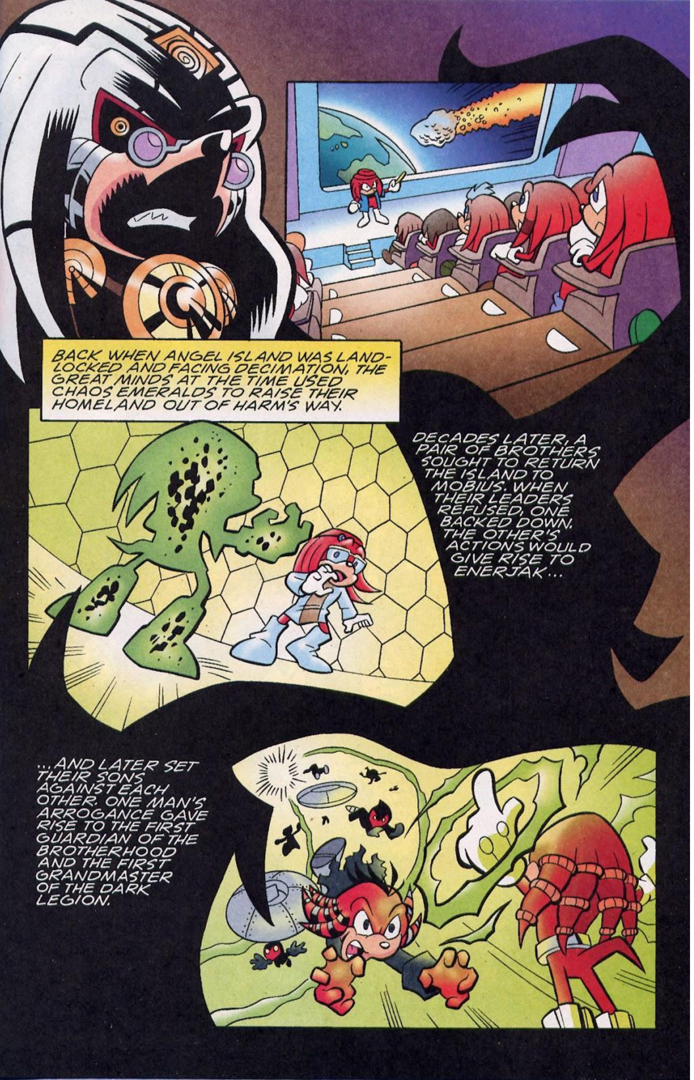
THERE. I WAS PLANNING ON PUNISHING DR. EGGMAN, ANYWAY.
UNGH... THE EGG GRAPES TOOK A SURPRISING AMOUNT OF POWER FROM ME. I MUST RETURN TO THE MASTER EMERALD FOR MORE.
ENERJAK! WHAT'S HAPPENED TO YOU?
MY POWER HAS BEEN DEPLETED. I NEED MORE. MY WORK IS NOT FINISHED!
YOUR WORK, OF COURSE.
THE SERVANTS ARE THE SEVEN CHAOS. CHAOS IS POWER, ENRICHED BY MY WILL.



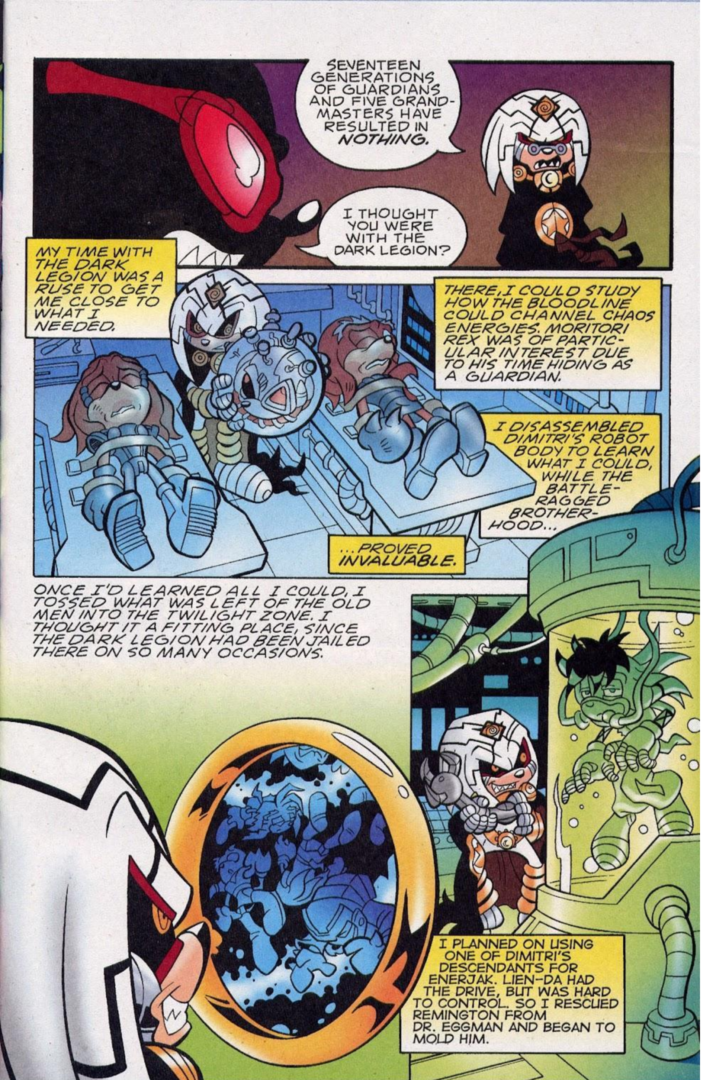
WHAM
THAT WILL BE ENOUGH OF THAT, GUYS!
WHAM
STOP! WHAT ARE YOU DOING?!
SOMETHING SCOURGE TRIED NOT TOO LONG AGO.
DON'T WORRY, KNUCKLES! I'LL NEUTRALIZE FINITEVUS' VOODOO THE SAME WAY I UNDID PERFECT CHAOS...
THIS MAY BE JUST WHAT I NEED.

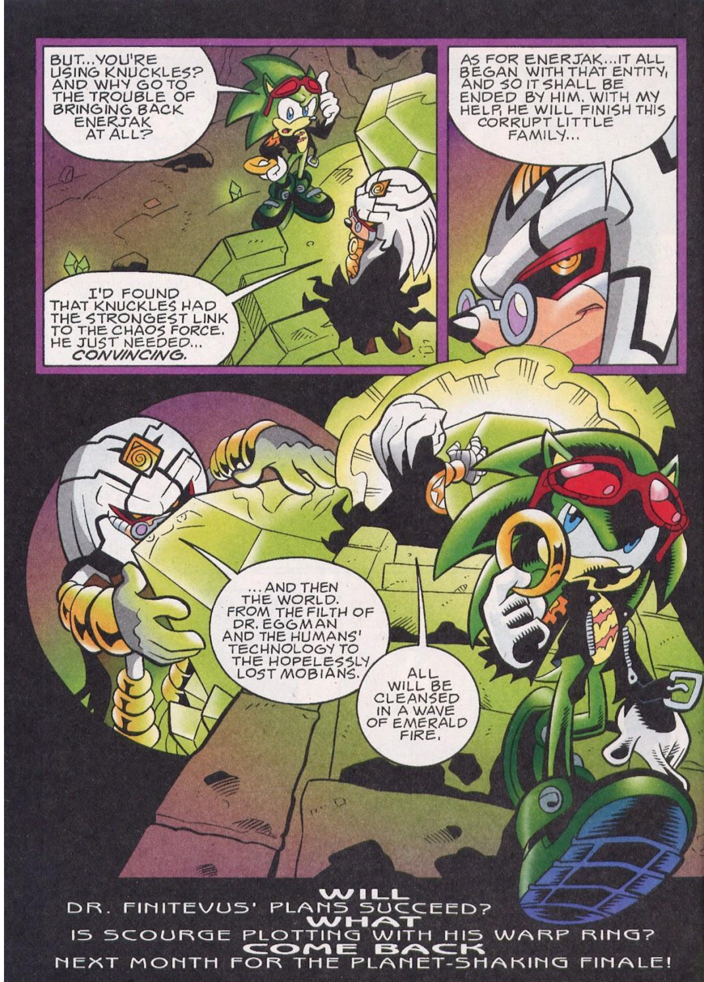

I'M GOING TO BEAT THE EVIL OUT OF YOU!
THE END IS NEAR! COME BACK NEXT ISSUE FOR THE EPIC CLASH OF TITANS! "ENERJAK: REBORN" ENDS WITH SUPER SONIC VS. ENERJAK! NOW TURN THE PAGE TO LEARN THE MOTIVES OF THE MYSTERIOUS DR. FINITEVUS!


ashes and dust
Writer: IAN FLYNN
Pencils: TRACY YARDLEY!
Inks: JIM AMASH
Colors: JASON JENSEN
Letters: JAY DUBB
HOURS EARLIER...
WHAT ARE YOU DOING WITH THE MASTER EMERALD, SCOURGE?
WHOA! DOC FINITEVUS!
NO WORRIES. I'M JUST CHARGING UP THIS WARP RING AS A "JUST-IN-CASE."
Y'KNOW... IF YOUR ENERJAK PLAN GOES SOUTH.
I SEE.
NOT LIKE I GET YOUR PLAN, OR WHAT IT'S ALL ABOUT, OR WHAT-EVER.
WHAT IT'S "ABOUT" DATES BACK HUNDREDS OF YEARS...


BACK WHEN ANGEL ISLAND WAS LAND-LOCKED AND FACING DECIMATION, THE GREAT MINDS AT THE TIME USED CHAOS EMERALDS TO RAISE THEIR HOMELAND OUT OF HARM'S WAY.
DECADES LATER, A PAIR OF BROTHERS SOUGHT TO RETURN THE ISLAND TO MOBIUS. WHEN THEIR LEADERS REFUSED, ONE BACKED DOWN. THE OTHER'S ACTIONS WOULD GIVE RISE TO ENERJAK...
...AND LATER SET THEIR SONS AGAINST EACH OTHER. ONE MAN'S ARROGANCE GAVE RISE TO THE FIRST GUARDIAN OF THE BROTHERHOOD AND THE FIRST GRANDMASTER OF THE DARK LEGION.


COUNTLESS ECHIDNA FAMILIES WOULD HAVE THEIR LIVES AFFECTED BY THIS BLOOD FEUD.
THE SQUABBLING HAS CROSSED TIME AND SPACE, GROWING MORE CONVOLUTED WITH EACH GENERATION.



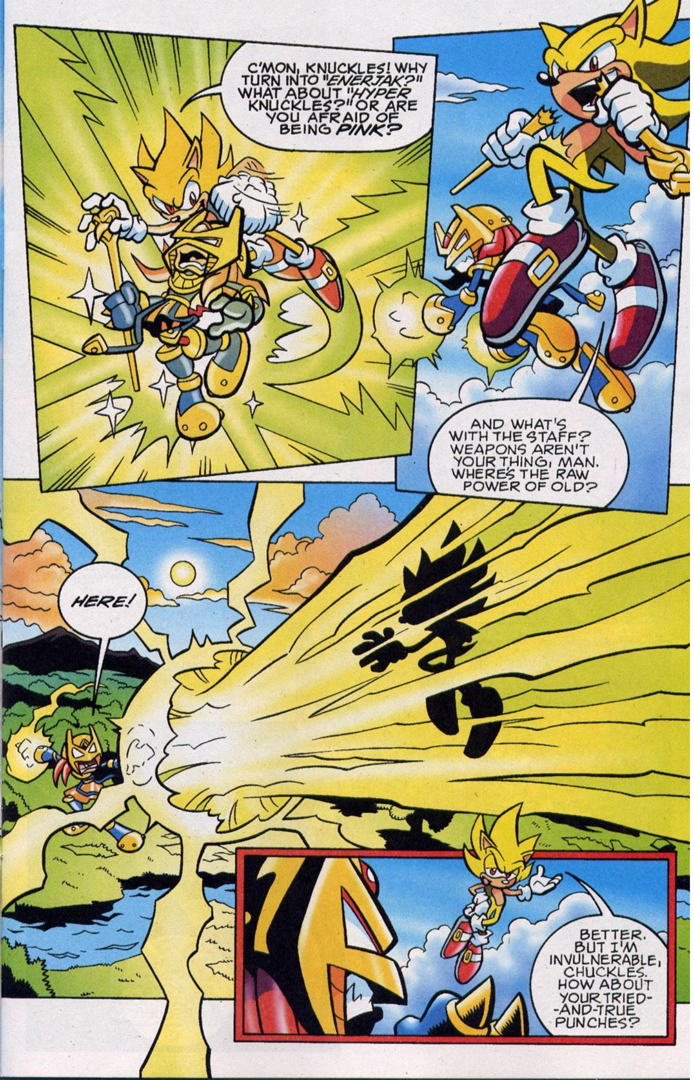


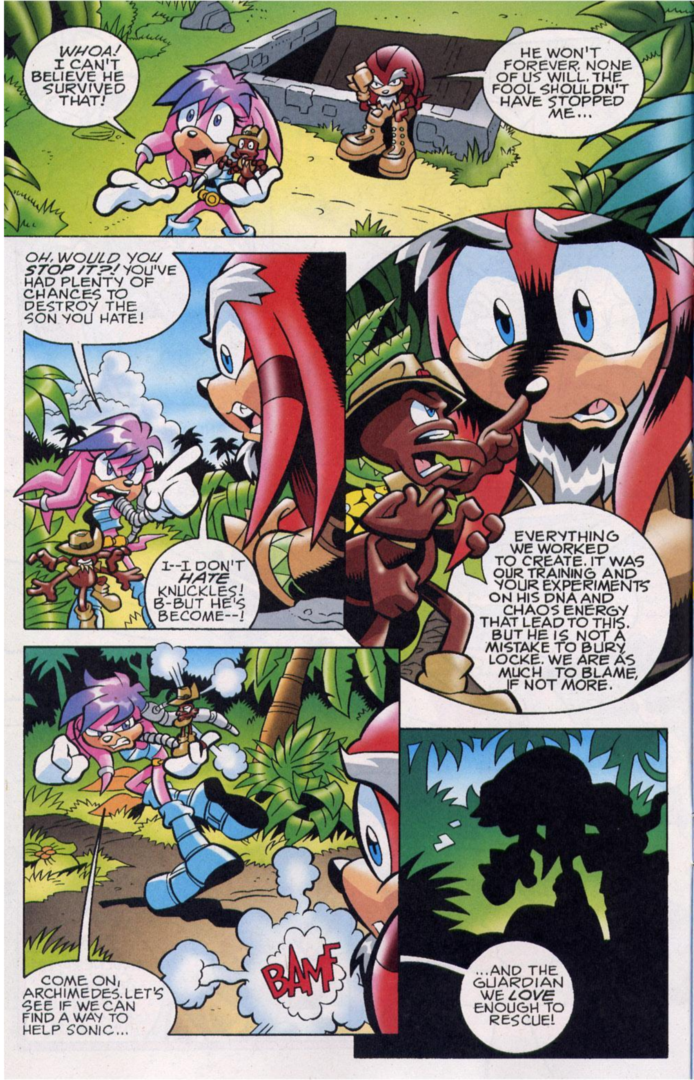
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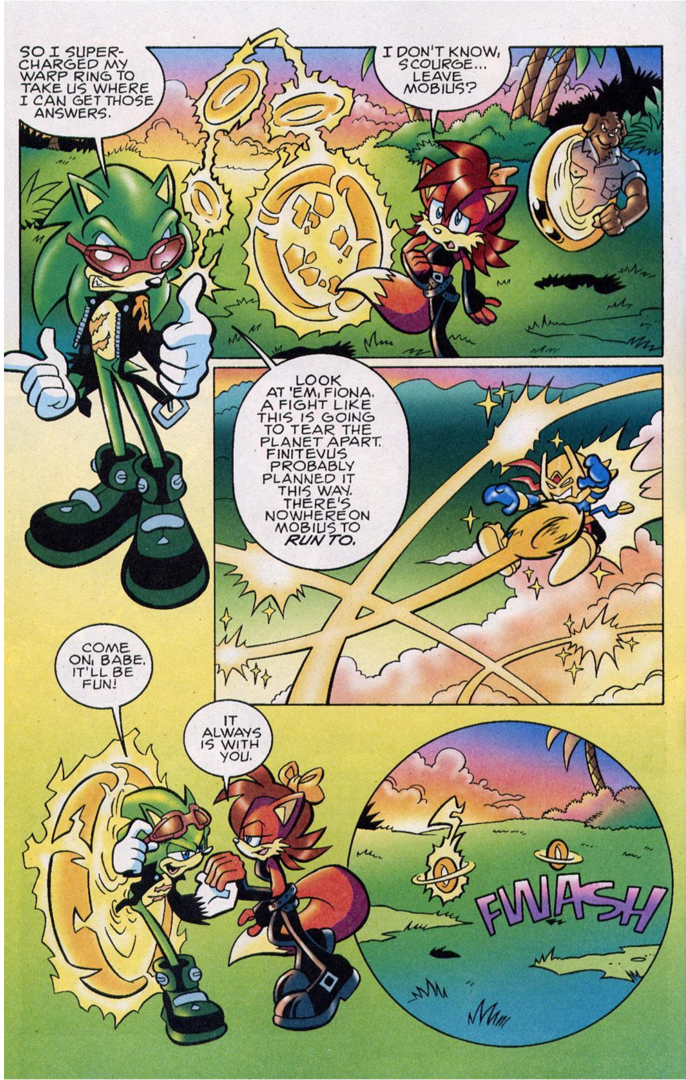

ALBION...
ENERJAK ?!
HAS TO BE.
NEW MOBO-TROPOLIS...
PLEASE TELL ME NICOLE GOT THE FORCE-FIELD BACK UP.
S-SHE DID...
ANGEL ISLAND...
KNUCKLES !!!
KRA-KOOM!

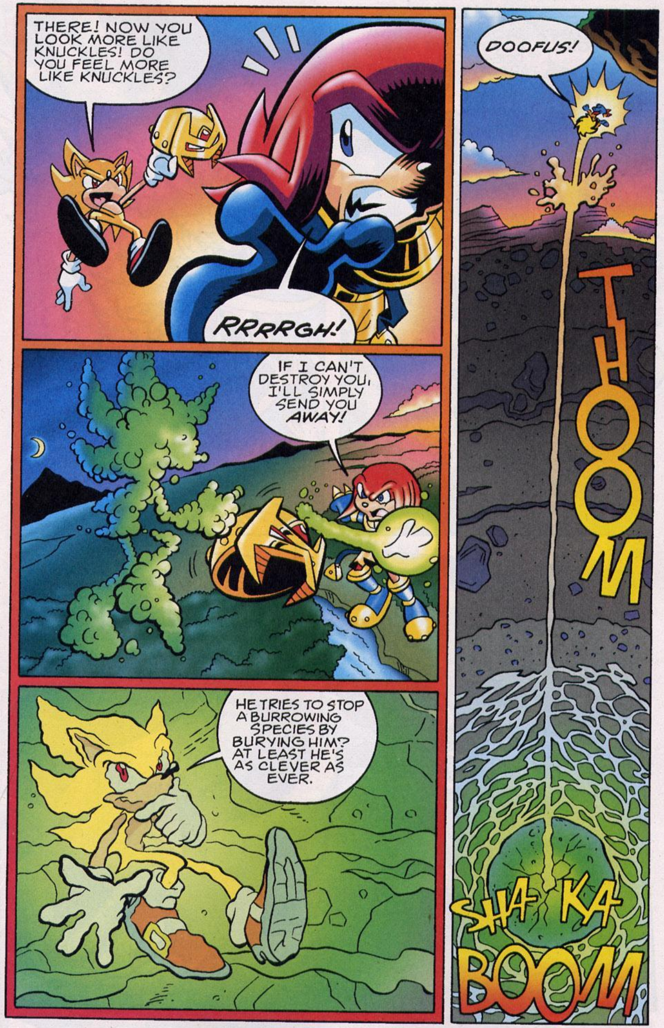

CHAOS ANGEL
YOU DARE TO USE MY POWER AGAINST ME?!
YOU BETTER BELIEVE IT!
JULIE-SU KNUCKLES' LOVE
SUPER SONIC HERO
LOCKE KNUCKLES' FATHER
ENERJAK KNUCKLES TURNED VILLAIN
DR. FINITEVUS CREATOR
Writer: IAN FLYNN • Pencils: TRACY YARDLEY! • Inks: JIM AMASH • Colors: JASON JENSEN • Letters: JOHN WORKMAN
Editor/Managing Editor: MIKE PELLERITO • Editor-in-Chief: VICTOR GORELICK
Special thanks to ROBERT LEFFLER, DYNA LOPEZ, and CINDY CHAU at SEGA Licensing


C'MON, KNUCKLES! WHY TURN INTO "ENERJAK?" WHAT ABOUT "HYPER KNUCKLES?" OR ARE YOU AFRAID OF BEING PINK?
AND WHAT'S WITH THE STAFF? WEAPONS AREN'T YOUR THING, MAN. WHERE'S THE RAW POWER OF OLD?
HERE!
BETTER. BUT I'M INVULNERABLE, CHUCKLES. HOW ABOUT YOUR TRIED-AND-TRUE PUNCHES?

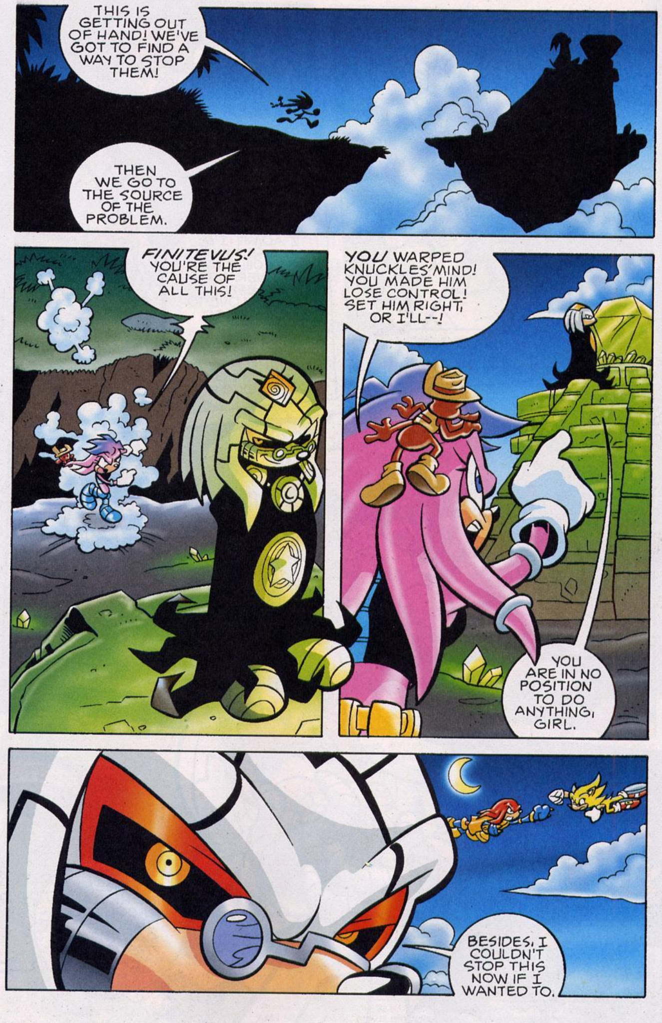

WHOA! I CAN'T BELIEVE HE SURVIVED THAT!
HE WON'T FOREVER. NONE OF US WILL. THE FOOL SHOULDN'T HAVE STOPPED ME...
OH, WOULD YOU STOP IT?! YOU'VE HAD PLENTY OF CHANCES TO DESTROY THE SON YOU HATE!
I--I DON'T HATE KNUCKLES! B-BUT HE'S BECOME--!
EVERYTHING WE WORKED TO CREATE. IT WAS OUR TRAINING AND YOUR EXPERIMENTS ON HIS DNA AND CHAOS ENERGY THAT LEAD TO THIS. BUT HE IS NOT A MISTAKE TO BURY, LOCKE. WE ARE AS MUCH TO BLAME, IF NOT MORE.
COME ON, ARCHIMEDES. LET'S SEE IF WE CAN FIND A WAY TO HELP SONIC...
BAMF
...AND THE GUARDIAN WE LOVE ENOUGH TO RESCUE!


KRAKOW
WHAT NOW, SLEUTH?
DOCTOR FINITEVUS ONLY PAID US TO KEEP WATCH OVER THAT WEAPON.*
*SEE LAST ISSUE.
WE'RE DONE HERE, DESTRUCTIX. FALL BACK.
SCOURGE? AREN'T YOU COMING?
ACTUALLY, SWEETS, I'VE GOT A BETTER IDEA.
SEE, LAST TIME I TANGLED WITH SONIC**, HE SAID SOME STUFF. IT GOT ME THINKING... ABOUT WHO I AM NOW. ABOUT WHAT I CAN REALLY DO.
**FLASH BACK TO STH # 172!

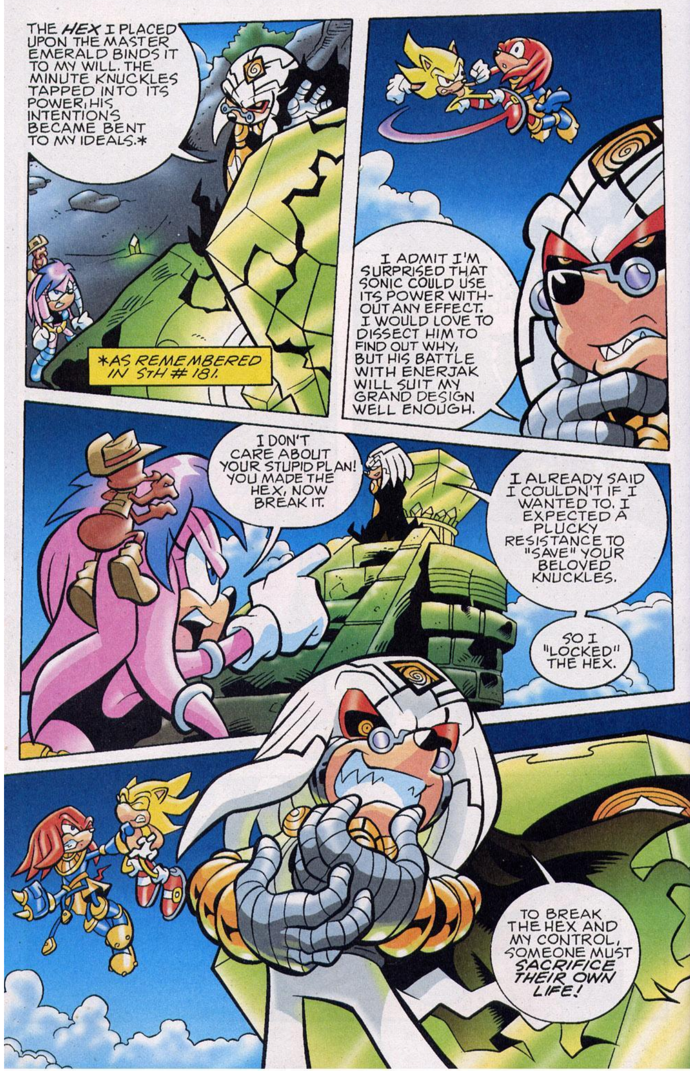

SO I SUPER-CHARGED MY WARP RING TO TAKE US WHERE I CAN GET THOSE ANSWERS.
I DON'T KNOW, SCOURGE... LEAVE MOBIUS?
LOOK AT 'EM, FIONA. A FIGHT LIKE THIS IS GOING TO TEAR THE PLANET APART. FINITEVUS PROBABLY PLANNED IT THIS WAY. THERE'S NOWHERE ON MOBIUS TO RUN TO.
COME ON, BABE. IT'LL BE FUN!
IT ALWAYS IS WITH YOU.
FWASH


THERE! NOW YOU LOOK MORE LIKE KNUCKLES! DO YOU FEEL MORE LIKE KNUCKLES?
RRRRGH!
IF I CAN'T DESTROY YOU, I'LL SIMPLY SEND YOU AWAY!
HE TRIES TO STOP A BURROWING SPECIES BY BURYING HIM? AT LEAST HE'S AS CLEVER AS EVER.
DOOFUS!
THOOM
SHA KA BOOM

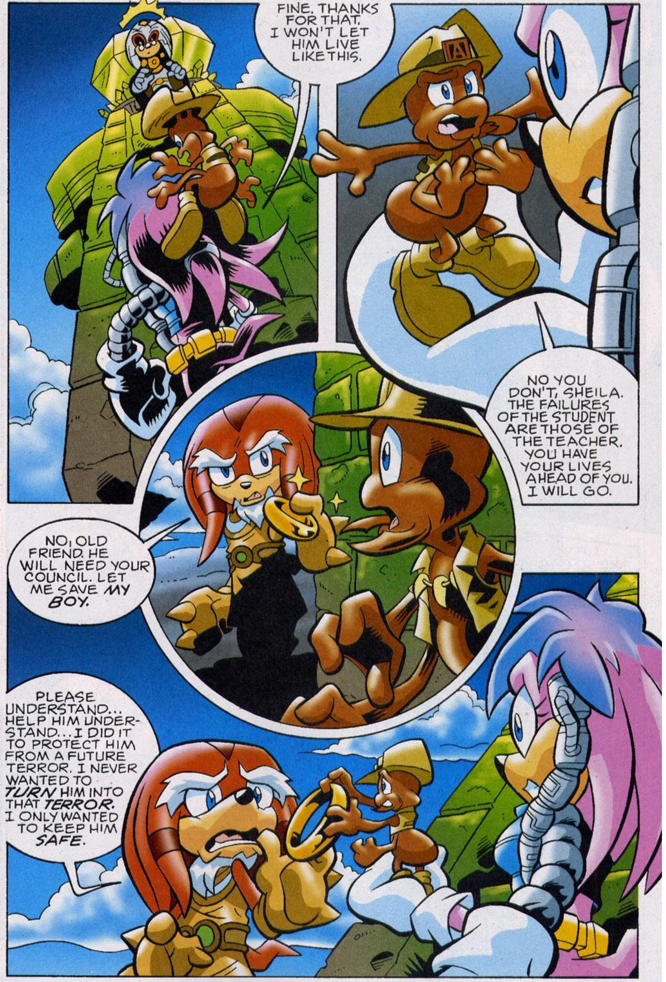

THUNDER ARROW!
ACK! ASIDE FROM ANNOY, YOUR MAGIC DOES DIDDLY! WHAT PART OF "INVULNERABLE" DON'T YOU GET?
WOULD YOU PREFER IF IT WERE CRUNCH TIME?!
WOOF!
YEAH! THAT'S MORE LIKE IT!
POW
I DON'T GET IT. MY POSITIVE AURA SHOULD'VE BROKEN THE DARK MAGIC BY NOW.* I CAN SEE SOME PROGRESS, BUT IT'S NOT ENOUGH!
*JUST LIKE HE DID IN THE CLASSIC StH #84.

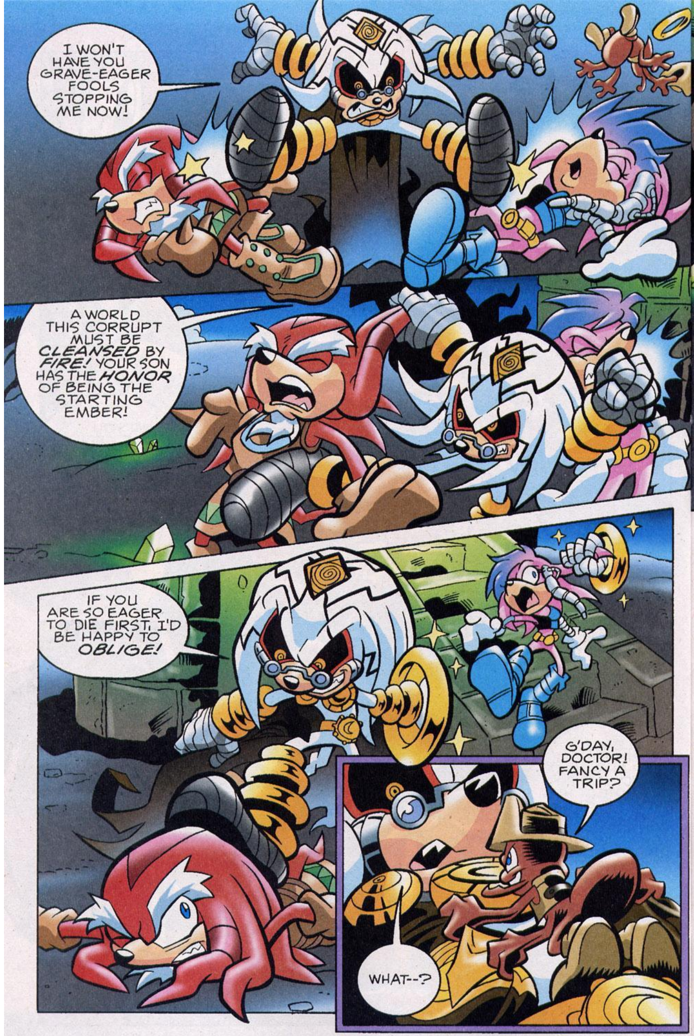


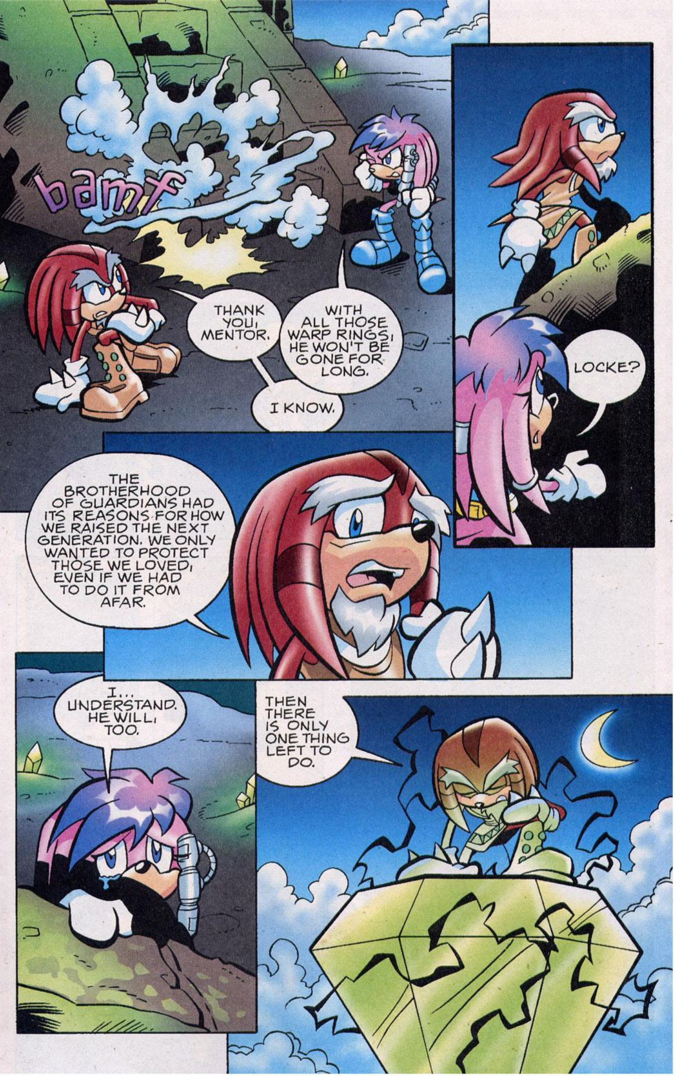
THIS IS GETTING OUT OF HAND! WE'VE GOT TO FIND A WAY TO STOP THEM!
THEN WE GO TO THE SOURCE OF THE PROBLEM.
FINITEVUS! YOU'RE THE CAUSE OF ALL THIS!
YOU WARPED KNUCKLES' MIND! YOU MADE HIM LOSE CONTROL! SET HIM RIGHT, OR I'LL--!
YOU ARE IN NO POSITION TO DO ANYTHING, GIRL.
BESIDES, I COULDN'T STOP THIS NOW IF I WANTED TO.

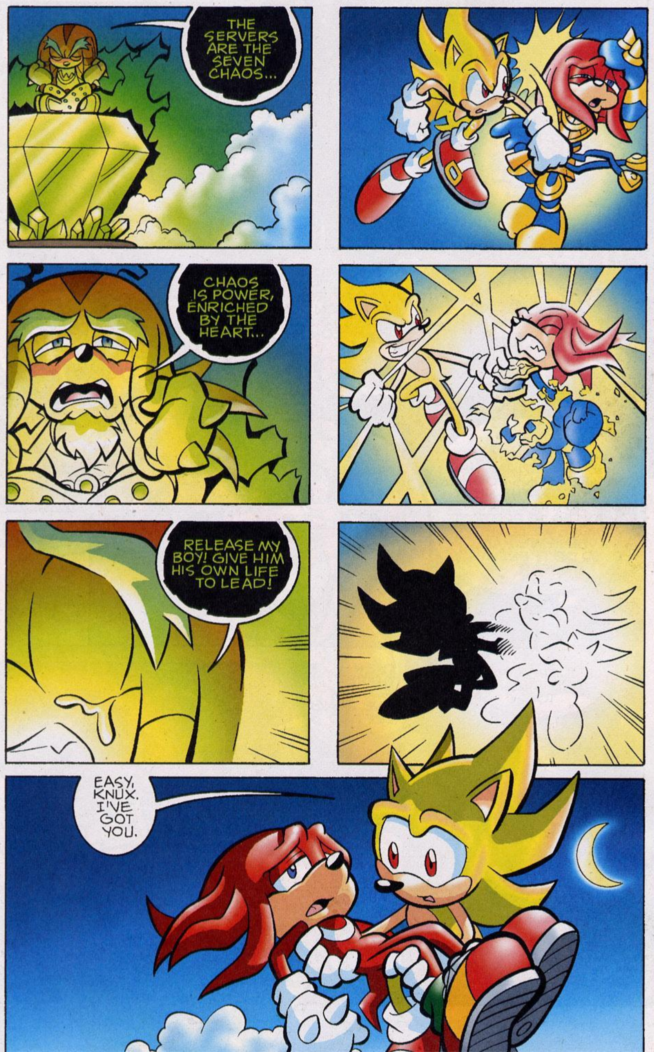


THE HEX I PLACED UPON THE MASTER EMERALD BINDS IT TO MY WILL. THE MINUTE KNUCKLES TAPPED INTO ITS POWER, HIS INTENTIONS BECAME BENT TO MY IDEALS.*
*AS REMEMBERED IN STH #181.
I ADMIT I'M SURPRISED THAT SONIC COULD USE ITS POWER WITHOUT ANY EFFECT. I WOULD LOVE TO DISSECT HIM TO FIND OUT WHY, BUT HIS BATTLE WITH ENERJAK WILL SUIT MY GRAND DESIGN WELL ENOUGH.
I DON'T CARE ABOUT YOUR STUPID PLAN! YOU MADE THE HEX, NOW BREAK IT.
I ALREADY SAID I COULDN'T IF I WANTED TO. I EXPECTED A PLUCKY RESISTANCE TO "SAVE" YOUR BELOVED KNUCKLES.
SO I "LOCKED" THE HEX.
TO BREAK THE HEX AND MY CONTROL, SOMEONE MUST SACRIFICE THEIR OWN LIFE!


FINE. THANKS FOR THAT. I WON'T LET HIM LIVE LIKE THIS.
NO YOU DON'T, SHEILA. THE FAILURES OF THE STUDENT ARE THOSE OF THE TEACHER. YOU HAVE YOUR LIVES AHEAD OF YOU. I WILL GO.
NO, OLD FRIEND. HE WILL NEED YOUR COUNCIL. LET ME SAVE *MY BOY.*
PLEASE UNDERSTAND... HELP HIM UNDER-STAND... I DID IT TO PROTECT HIM FROM A FUTURE TERROR. I NEVER WANTED TO *TURN* HIM INTO THAT *TERROR.* I ONLY WANTED TO KEEP HIM *SAFE.*


I WON'T HAVE YOU GRAVE-EAGER FOOLS STOPPING ME NOW!
A WORLD THIS CORRUPT MUST BE *CLEANSED* BY *FIRE!* YOUR SON HAS THE *HONOR* OF BEING THE STARTING EMBER!
IF YOU ARE SO EAGER TO DIE FIRST, I'D BE HAPPY TO *OBLIGE!*
G'DAY, DOCTOR! FANCY A TRIP?
WHAT--?


BAMF
THANK YOU, MENTOR.
WITH ALL THOSE WARP RINGS, HE WON'T BE GONE FOR LONG.
I KNOW.
LOCKE?
THE BROTHERHOOD OF GUARDIANS HAD ITS REASONS FOR HOW WE RAISED THE NEXT GENERATION. WE ONLY WANTED TO PROTECT THOSE WE LOVED, EVEN IF WE HAD TO DO IT FROM AFAR.
I... UNDERSTAND. HE WILL, TOO.
THEN THERE IS ONLY ONE THING LEFT TO DO.


THE SERVERS ARE THE SEVEN CHAOS...
CHAOS IS POWER, ENRICHED BY THE HEART...
RELEASE MY BOY! GIVE HIM HIS OWN LIFE TO LEAD!
EASY, KNUX. I'VE GOT YOU.

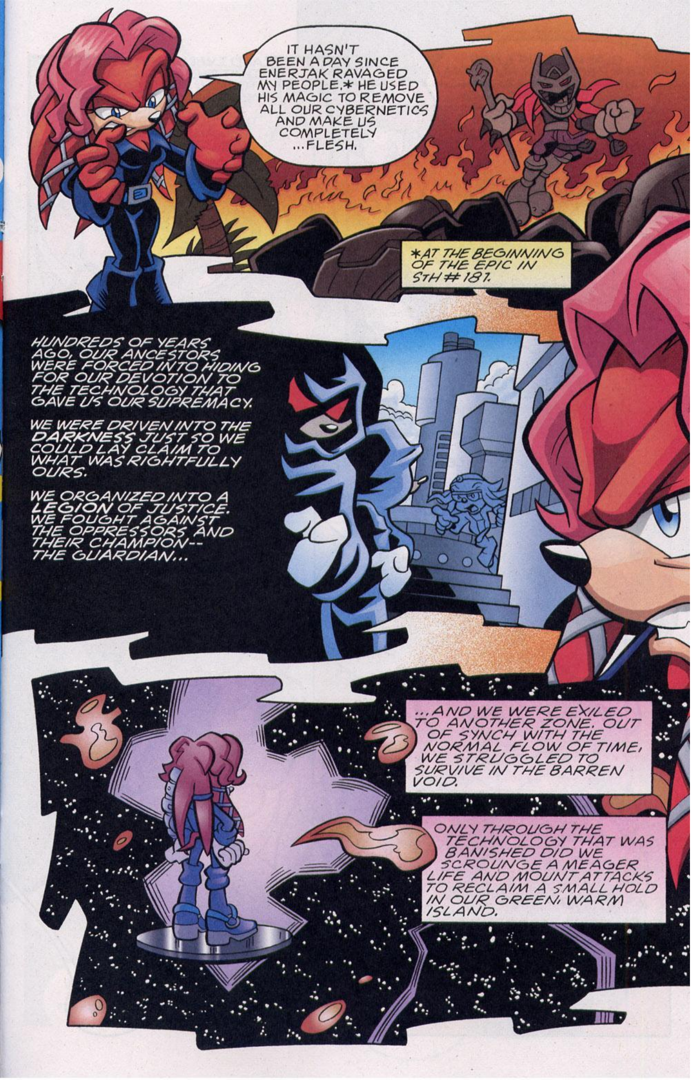

EASY DOES IT, BUD.
JULIE-SU! WHERE'S DAD? I THOUGHT I HEARD HIM...
KNUCKLES...
I'M *SO SORRY.* THERE WAS NO OTHER WAY! THINGS MOVED TOO FAST, AND-AND-AND HE JUST WENT--!
SLOW DOWN! "*HE WENT?*" YOU MEAN DAD--?
RAAAARGH!
THE OLD FOOL DID IT! ALL THAT RESEARCH AND CASTING FOR *NOTHING!* AT THIS RATE, HIS BRAT WILL REMEMBER SOME OF THIS FARCE...
I REMEMBER...


--EVERYTHING!
HRK!
GET BACK UP HERE.
ANOTHER TIME, PERHAPS.





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IT HASN'T BEEN A DAY SINCE ENERJAK RAVAGED MY PEOPLE.* HE USED HIS MAGIC TO REMOVE ALL OUR CYBERNETICS AND MAKE US COMPLETELY ...FLESH.
*AT THE BEGINNING OF THE EPIC IN STH #181.
HUNDREDS OF YEARS AGO, OUR ANCESTORS WERE FORCED INTO HIDING FOR OUR DEVOTION TO THE TECHNOLOGY THAT GAVE US OUR SUPREMACY.
WE WERE DRIVEN INTO THE DARKNESS JUST SO WE COULD LAY CLAIM TO WHAT WAS RIGHTFULLY OURS.
WE ORGANIZED INTO A LEGION OF JUSTICE. WE FOUGHT AGAINST THE OPPRESSORS AND THEIR CHAMPION-- THE GUARDIAN...
...AND WE WERE EXILED TO ANOTHER ZONE. OUT OF SYNCH WITH THE NORMAL FLOW OF TIME, WE STRUGGLED TO SURVIVE IN THE BARREN VOID.
ONLY THROUGH THE TECHNOLOGY THAT WAS BANISHED DID WE SCROUNGE A MEAGER LIFE AND MOUNT ATTACKS TO RECLAIM A SMALL HOLD IN OUR GREEN, WARM ISLAND.


OUR WAY OF LIFE HAS BEEN STOLEN FROM US. THE DARK LEGION WILL DO ANYTHING TO RECLAIM OUR BIRTHRIGHT.
AND I WILL SEE TO IT THAT THEY'RE LOYAL TO YOU. JUST MAKE ME GRANDMASTER OF THE LEGION. THEY'LL FOLLOW ME, AND I WILL FOLLOW YOU.
MY TIME AS LEADER IS DUE. MY LATE BROTHER TOOK COMMAND WHEN OUR FATHER... PASSED.
WHEN GREAT-GREAT-GRANDFATHER DIMITRI RETURNED, HE ASSUMED COMMAND UNTIL HE RAN.
WE HAVE SIMILAR EXPECTATIONS IN OBEDIENCE AND DISCIPLINE. IF ENERJAK GOT TO YOU, YOU'LL NEED NEW GROUND FORCES. WHAT DO YOU SAY?
I SAY--





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-MULTIVERSAL MONITORS-
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HEROES FOR HOPE